THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW

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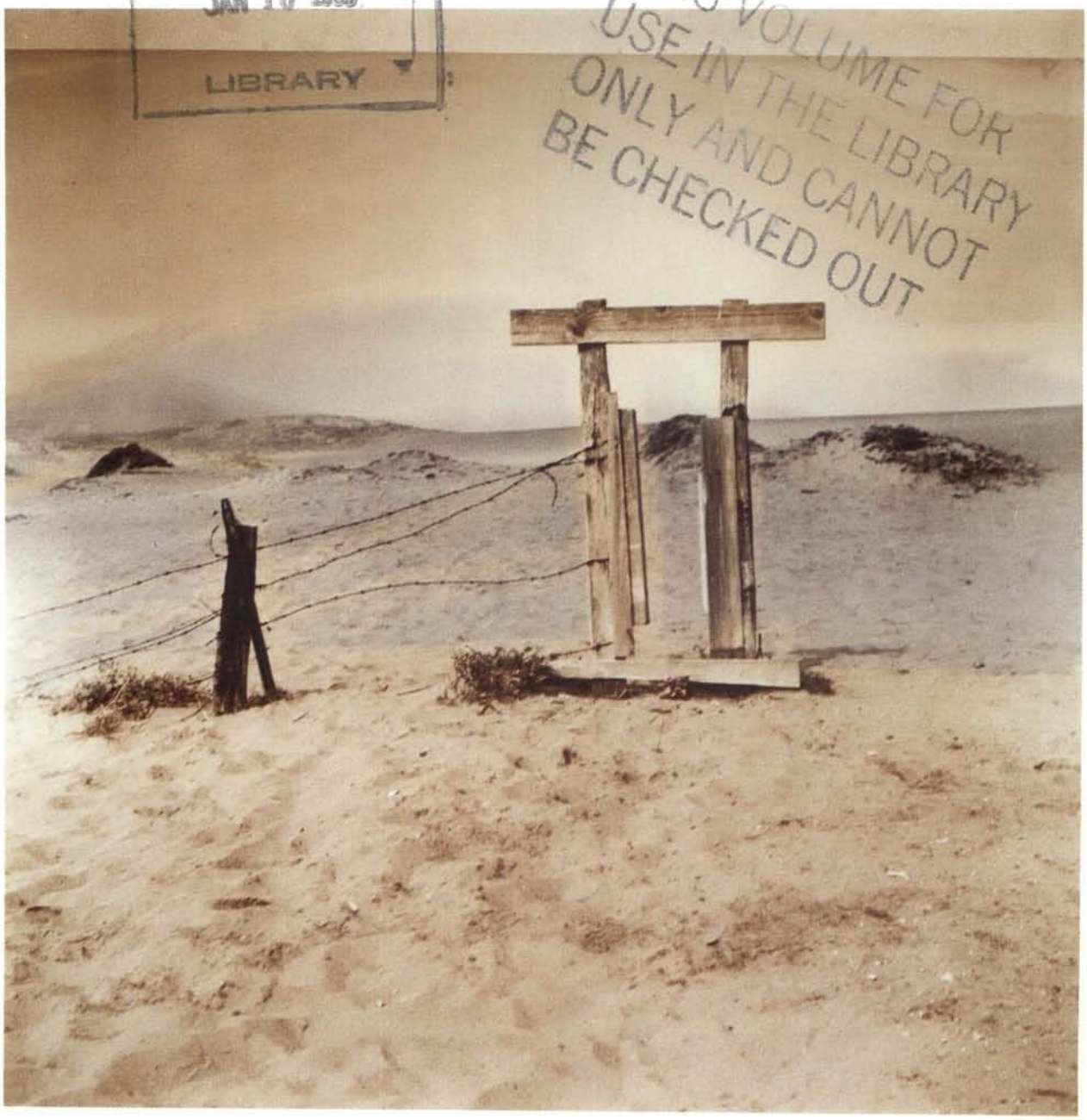

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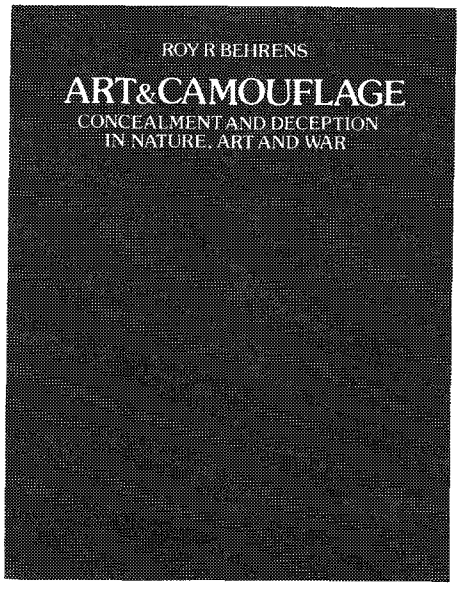
PICASSO: We invented camouflage—it's Cubism!

BRAQUE: I was happy when the army used the principles of my Cubist paintings for camouflage.



Countless authors and artists have alluded to the curious resemblance between Cubism and camouflage, but no one has ever pursued it. **ART AND CAMOUFLAGE**, both a history and a theory, traces the direct involvement with military and natural camouflage of major artists, including Arshile Gorky, Moholy-Nagy, Ellsworth Kelly, Oskar Schlemmer and numerous others.

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Guy Davenport [from the preface].

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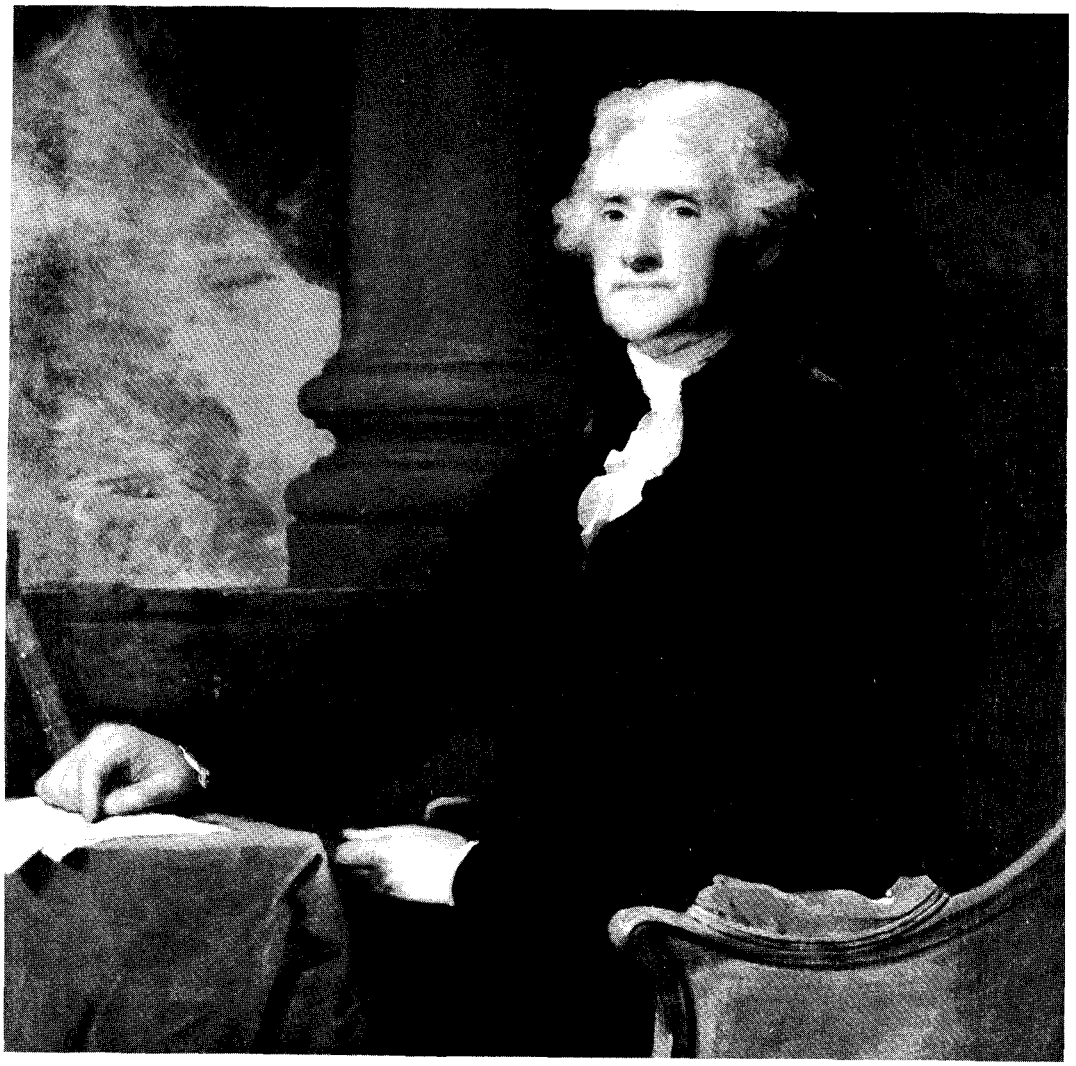

Sir Monticello Mar. 27. 25.

I am a subscriber to the N. American review and understand you are agent for that work in Richmond. it will be more convenient for me to have it furnished from that place because payment there is easier made. I shall be glad therefore to receive it from you and this letter presented to Colo. Bernard Peyton of Richmond (my correspdt) will ensure your receiving payment from him on my account, once a year or oftener if you chuse. I have received No. 46. but not Nos. 44. and 45. which I shall be glad therefore now to receive. accept the assurance of my respect.

Th: J.

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

The first order of the world's business these days is survival—and survival not simply of the "free world," but of the whole world. That in mind, we're pleased to reprint (beginning on page 46) Kurt Vonnegut's "Fates Worse than Death." His is a small and intelligent voice ranged against large and foolish voices everywhere, yet one hopes that a multitude of small and intelligent voices will ultimately prevail. The notion in some quarters that the desire for peace has its roots in subversion, treason, or sympathy with the International Communist Conspiracy is idiotic on its face (though it has occurred to us that if the Soviets, too, wish for peace, we're willing to share the wish). What's wrong with the desire to tell our children they have a reasonable chance at ripe old age?

Fiction newcomers to this issue of the NAR: Annette Sanford, Paula Newcomer, Jeannine Atkins, Eric Goodman. Karlton Kelm is almost new to us; his last appearance in this magazine was in the 1930s. This is a mixed bag of stories, and readers with long attention spans should make the most of them, against the threat of a new round of 4-minute stories in March.

Some Postscripts: "Putting and Gardening," a story by William F. Van Wert which appeared in the June 1982 issue has been selected for inclusion in the next edition of the *O. Henry Prize Stories*, to be published by Doubleday. . . . Janette Hospital, a Canadian writer whose fiction the NAR published in 1979, is this year's winner of the $50,000 Seal First Novel Award, the book entitled *The Ivory Swing*, published by McClelland & Stewart. . . . John Morgan (see page 4) has a book-length poetry collection included in a current Poetry Series volume published by the *Quarterly Review of Literature*, as does another NAR contributor, Sidney Sulkin. This sort of singling out, of course, is risky; so many writers familiar to NAR readers are publishing books that we're only able to note items that forcibly nudge us.

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★ THE NORTH AMERICAN ★

REVIEW

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Notes from Wales (Alaska)

Here at the tip of the Seward Peninsula, where it points west into the Bering Strait, an arrow in the shack that stands as the village post office also points west. Neatly hand-lettered, it announces: "Russia, 30 Miles."

Partly to verify this fact, the other day I climbed the steep ridge that rises to the southeast behind the straggly double line of houses along the single dirt street that constitutes the Eskimo village of Wales, Alaska (pop. 130). It was a warm day, near fifty, sunny, and the wind which usually blows in a confusing, gusty, shifting fashion was temporarily calm. I followed the small stream that provides summer water for the village up to its source in a tundra spring. Snow buntings flitted around me, individually curious but cautious in groups, each warning the others not to get too close. Among the dark gray rocks I caught a fleeting glimpse of a bulky arctic hare. Two hours out of town, climbing toward the bright sun, as I neared the ridge-line there appeared on a farther ridge a large silver dish, rivaling the sun: an Air Force radar station, staring west.

I sat down on a boulder and turned that way myself. The village had disappeared below and I looked out on the Bering Sea. To the north, more water: Kotzebue Sound and the Chukchi Sea. Mid-water, on this unusually clear morning lay the two Diomedes: islands separated by less than three miles, yet one full day apart. Little Diomede, part of Alaska and the U.S., is situated on our side of the International Date Line. Big Diomede, against which the smaller island is a dark silhouette, lies on the far side of the line, a day ahead of us. It belongs to the U.S.S.R.

Still farther off, about fifty-five miles from where I sat, I could see through haze the dim outline of the Siberian Coast.

I was, in effect, looking through time, into tomorrow, looking ahead by exactly one day, and I was somewhat reassured that the far coast appeared innocent, peaceful, reassured though I knew there would be large silver dishes out there staring back over here at us; and beyond the radar stations, missiles too, much like our own. But from the unusual vantage point I had, it was as easy to look back as ahead. For, if archaeologists are correct, the spot where I was sitting, sipping a six ounce can of Dole's unsweetened pineapple juice (57¢ at the Wales Native Store), looked out on the route of crossing of the first people ever to set foot in the New World. And not just men had crossed here, but mastodons, mammoths, the hairy rhino: here lay the land bridge, here the crossings wave upon wave, Siberians moving east, animals first, then man. Indians, Eskimos.

In addition to its Eskimos, Wales is home to a handful of Caucasians and a Philippino-American couple who manage the Naval weather station. Most of the Eskimos are out of town now, gone "camping" thirty miles to the northeast, where, at camp, they follow traditional ways, hunting, fishing, gathering berries. Those currently in town seem to wish they weren't—they feel the pull of the camp—but they're here usually out of a sense of responsibility to their children: school started this week. The kids having a good time out at camp will be falling behind in their schoolwork. Talking the other evening to my host, Walter Weyapuk, I could sense his hopes for his daughter Leah. A high school graduate himself (as is his wife, though this is not at all common in Wales), he patiently coached the bright, round-faced, smiling girl with her math and writing.

Walter is the postmaster (Wales, AK 99783). Compact, with a black wispy beard, a black moustache, he smokes as he talks, his hair shoulder-length like mine, a digital watch on his wrist. There's a mound behind the village, he tells me, a designated "Historical Site." Another village once stood there, its people in friendly competition with the people of Wales. But as time went on feuding developed, fighting maybe; anyway, the ones over there picked up and moved. They went up north to the village of Point Hope. When Walter Weyapuk left Wales to attend high school, his roommate came from Point Hope. They compared notes and found that the two village traditions agree on this point.

The Weyapuks, Walter, his wife Flo, Leah, and an adopted two-year-old son, much-loved Michael, occupy a three bedroom pre-fab house provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Now, Eskimos aren't Indians, but at $35 a month, they'll take the house. Many other families in town have identical dwellings, and those who don't usually live worse. This place is comfortable, even if it isn't quite secure against the arctic winds. Its kitchen—a common feature in the village—has two stoves and no refrigerator (the enclosed front porch serves well enough for that). *Two* stoves because, should the village generator conk out, a backup heat source will be needed.

Yes, there's electricity, but no plumbing. The BIA-provided bathtub serves for storage. I noticed that it currently contains a basket filled with dirty laundry, two large bags of Friskies Dog Dinner, several rolls of paper towels, a rusted two gallon can, cables, some boxes of Pampers, a rug, and a fancy oval Cardin make-up box. For a toilet, the now-traditional "honey-pot"—a covered plastic bucket with a toilet seat above a disposable plastic bag.

I've felt a lot of different things in the three days since I flew in from Nome. The plane that brought me, a rickety six-seater provided by Forster Air Charter, followed the coastline for the last half-hour no more than 100 feet off the water. Along the way we saw five or six dead walruses on the beach, and each time my pilot moved in closer, hoping to spot one with tusks. No luck—they'd already been removed. I'll admit I was scared as we banked steeply around those rocky points of land that jut out into the sea—scared but exhilarated. And I was feeling something else, something more disturbing—separation anxiety, I decided it was. It was like being sent away to camp for the first time.

In Nome I was told it would be rough, that I would see some disturb-

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ing things, some things that would disgust me. I haven't found it that way. Look, I'm from New York: what could be rougher than that? Still, my moods here fluctuate, intense interest giving way to periods of intense boredom. The thought of living here—no movie house; no tv, for God's sake!—horrifies me at times. At other moments it seems perfectly natural. The Weyapuks' extended family—the grandmother (a distinguished village elder), the many uncles and cousins—takes in a good percentage of the population here, and reminds me in some ways of my own large New York Jewish family, with similar tensions, intimacies, rewards.

In many ways Wales is much less cut-off than I'd expected. Radio, telephone, mail service, c.b., hi-fi all connect it to the fast-moving world out there. "I collect albums," Walter tells me. "I can pick up the phone, call Anchorage, and have the records I want in five days." His latest shipment just came in: Linda Ronstadt, Billy Joel, the Stones ("Emotional Rescue"), Eagles, Lipps Inc. "The Greeks Don't Like No Freaks" gloats the hi-fi, as we sip tea, munch on pizza, thumb through *Newsweek*, a Sears catalog, the *National Enquirer*. All these reach Wales, and more.

And yet it is *not* the same. Walter tells me about the spring hunt. First whales (beluga and bowhead), then bearded seals, then walrus, each for a period of weeks coming up the coast on their annual migrations. This spring—much excitement—for the first time in ten years the village got a bowhead, a small one, thirty-five feet. When that happens, everybody in the village gets some, everybody eats better. With chicken at the village store going for $7.50 apiece, subsistence hunting is no joke.

Still, the Weyapuks do vary their diet with an occasional chicken, with beef (generally cooked as soup), with pizza (the Chef Boyardee pepperoni mix costs $3.02, but if you live here you get used to the prices). My first meal in town was bearded seal with onions. For dessert, "Eskimo ice-cream": reindeer fat and sugar whipped up over salmon berries. The dried seal was milder than I'd expected, the salmon berries crisp and sweet; I went easy on the ice-cream.

The other day Eric flew in. Tall, bearded, white, a man of the Sixties, casual in manner but intensely talkative, driving. From Milwaukee originally, he's lived in Nome the past six years, travels around to the villages buying up ivory (walrus tusks, whale bone, fossil mammoth and mastodon tusks), carved and uncarved, buying it up for re-sale in Nome. I suspect some of the stuff he buys comes from that mound behind the village—not strictly legal trade. Eric is happy to spend $100 to get here, confident of turning a good profit in Nome.

He cuts overhead, I'm told, by bringing in booze and selling it to a few reliable customers. The night he spent here was the only time I've seen a drunken Eskimo in the village. As that old man weaved his way up the street, children were called in to the homes. Eric is also blamed for the break-up last year of a marriage. Again it was booze.

But it would be wrong, I am aware, to idealize Wales and blame its problems on outsiders. The occasional drowning or hunting accident, the drinking and drugs, the too frequent suicides—these are not all imports from Nome. 130 people on a sandy spit of land reaching into an arctic sea—what a fragile enterprise at any time of year! And when winter closes in with roof-high drifts, subzero cold, and nearly continuous dark, who'd blame the whole town for folding up and moving elsewhere?

Wrong again. Those are my white-man's natural assumptions, but in fact not winter but summer is the alien season here. Oh, the few warm perfect days of continuous sunlight are appreciated, but except for fish-camp the residents of Wales find summer boring. There's just not that much to do. The kids play soccer and climb on the roofs. The adults play pinochle, pool (in the Village Association rec hall), and visit back and forth. Winter brings snow-machines, ice-skating, downhill and cross-country skiing, dog sleds. Chop a hole in the ice and drop a line. Remembering keenly, Walter tells me how he contrived a twenty foot-long snow tunnel from the postoffice door out to the street last winter. Snow is the Eskimo's element.

I'm here on a "rural orientation" program from the University of Alaska where I teach. Just whose "orientation" is involved is not exactly clear, but I dutifully pass out the stamped postcards I've been given addressed to the Office of Admissions and Records. The villagers can write for information. Natives make up about ten percent of the students at the Fairbanks campus, well below their proportion in the state population. I find, however, that the people of Wales are well aware of the University: the chairman of the Art Department, Ron Senungetuk, comes from Wales. Walter Weyapuk asks me somewhat wistfully if it's true that it takes four full years to get a degree. It's just too long to be away from the village, where he is an important member of the Council and the Board of the Village Corporation. Since the Native Claims Settlement Act, the village has had to manage large sums of money. The new general store was built out of these funds, but in general, Walter says, the older people just want the money kept in a bank. He would like to see more spent on improvements: a better generator, perhaps, or plumbing.

Besides Walter, a number of kids—teenagers—seem genuinely interested in the University. But whether interested or not, the villagers all seem puzzled by my presence. Archaeologists have been here to study their mound and anthropologists to study their traditions, their *way of life*, but I am neither of these. I shrug, smile, repeat the words "rural orientation," and try to explain.

One feeling I neglected to mention before, but it comes back to me strongly as I sit here on the ridge looking out over all that land and water—is privilege. What an honor to be able to fly in to this village, be met at the airstrip and welcomed into a home. I pay my way of course, but that's not the point. It's so easy in this day of mass culture to lose all sense of the particularity of your own personal experience: how little we do that isn't equally available to everyone we know. But this is certainly different and enriching. My strongest regret, I find, is that I can't stay longer and spend some time at the fish-camp. The impact of Western culture is recent, subsistence hunting thousands of years old.

Yesterday, a flock of cranes in a lopsided V flew over, honking, coming from Siberia. Someone ran out of a house and fired a shot at them right in the middle of the village. I'll take that away with me, along with all the bones that litter and for me symbolize the elemental nature of the place: whale bones, seal bones, scattered vertebrae and ribs—bones of all sizes going back to the sand. On one doorstep the skulls and tusks of a half-dozen walruses.

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JAMES HAZARD

NEGROES IN WHITING, INDIANA

for Paul Cebar

I heard my uncle downstairs the night he smashed
a Glenn Miller record so as not to hear it anymore,
say he wanted to marry Billie Holiday. I heard
the little shrieks and giggles. Saturday nights
were party nights for grown ups and kids stayed up-
stairs, listening. Louis Jordan and His Tympani Five,
Fats Waller playing Harlem stride, Billie Holiday
who the grown ups got to see in Chicago live,
Louis Armstrong whose band had only one white man, Jack
Teagarden, and when the Glenn Miller record was busted
Frankie Newton played "The World is Waiting for the
Sunrise." During the war my cousin Billie, who was
an Army nurse in France hitch-hiked a plane ride home
from the Front on a weekend pass. She had armloads
of absinthe and GI records of Duke Ellington and
the party went two days and nights till she flew back
to the war in time. Kansas City, Storyville,
Harlem most of all, Chicago's South Side, all the dark
cities instructing the downstairs, my family moving
and even talking to that music and it coming upstairs
to the children too. Gene Krupa's band had Roy
Eldridge and they made that record with Anita O'Day
"Let Me Off Uptown." A black man and a white woman—
they played that one downstairs too. Some guys
wrote girls' names on their notebooks at school.
I wrote LOUIS ARMSTRONG and HOT LIPS PAGE and wished
my uncle really did marry Billie Holiday. My father
took me to see Satchel Paige pitch his first start
in the majors. It was SRO at Chicago's Comiskey Park
and we had box seats. My Dad said, "If they didn't have
white shirts we wouldn't see anyone in the ballpark."
It was a night game, get it? "We may be the only white
people here," he said. And the same on the streetcar
home too. That was a new one on us, from Whiting:
Whiting, Indiana, where the law was, till after the
war, no Negroes on the street after dark without
permission in writing. Were we scared? A little
but mostly, listening to the talk—up tempo because
Satchel beat the White Sox, I felt I'd got down-
stairs to the party, for the first time in my life.

And I'll take this—a yellow Bombi "Bombardier" towing a flat-bed trailer. On the flat-bed a green metal boat with two outboards. In the boat, brown plastic bags loaded with supplies, and four people sitting up there, two with holstered pistols. A large tan dog is handed up to them and eagerly joins their company, as they set off in high spirits for camp. One of the men in the trailer is white: someone who stayed.

I feel I could stay too, but I know I won't. A question arises: I've taken no snapshots, what can I bring home with me that will inevitably remind me of this place? The shells on the beach—some are beautiful—and the driftwood, sure I've collected some, but these are much like shells and driftwood from any beach, only more plentiful.

I know what I want. Behind the Weyapuks' house, discarded among sand-grass, there's a large whale vertebra from that bowhead they got last spring. It must be twenty inches across the beam, a rich creamy brown, and nobody seems to claim it.

The morning I'm to leave the weather turns bad. A stong southeast wind, heavy fog. The whitecaps are up. KNOM announces that a Wien Twin-Otter has taken off for Shishmaref, Wales, Teller, and back to Nome. No mention of my Forster Cessna. It seems touch and go as I lug my suitcase, my sleeping bag, my whale vertebra—I seem to need another hand for all this—out to the hangar, a quarter of a mile from town. I watch the fog and mist lift, then come back heavy. I hear a drone. It's the Twin-Otter taxiing up the runway. I'll get on if I can. But it turns out to be mostly for freight and full up. Then, as they're about to take off they pass the word that's just come in by radio: my charter is on its way.

I have at least an hour's wait. My thoughts move forward and back, but already my experiences here are changing, acquiring a frame, becoming dream-like. I don't feel I'm losing them, I feel they're going deeper. Last night I stayed up till near two a.m. and wrote most of this article—just a snap-shot, really. I can't claim more for it than that. Others will have to do the sociology, the economics, the political structure of the place. They will see Wales, perhaps, as a problem to be solved, and, solving it, will come away with answers of a much more positive sort than any I've acquired.

What can I do? I'm just a tourist after all. I love the place, but I can't stay. Yesterday I asked Flo Weyapuk about the vertebra, whether it would be all right to take it. She shrugged and said, a bit puzzled, a bit amused: "You found it. It's yours."

—John Morgan

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BROWSING IN THE ARTS. The *New Yorker* story is so much a type that the author rarely signifies. It's a product of analytic reductionism—a perfection of observed mood and moment, a dissertation of detail. Less a slice of life than of life sliced thin. Much of modern poetry—collectively titled Me—is so intricately reflexive as to appear exotic, if often written in "plain" language. A rule is that you must not appear to be talking about what you're talking about. But much of it is unmemorable because the developed sensitivity is by now so widespread as to de-individualize the work, ironically to typify it. It's like a lot of abstract painting: the "approach" is memorable and feels important; the individual work less so. As for contemporary music, it seems largely involved in preparing us to understand the sounds of something plugged in. The hypothetical monkey never could write *Hamlet.* Neither could anyone else. What odds on the computer?

XMAS SHOPPING GUIDE

(+)	(−)
NAR	NRA
dance	drizzle
ice cream	tight shoes
dogs	lifestyle
jazz	health food
a smile	Scandinavian films
W.C. Fields	Brooke Shields
sex	sex
company	committee
the Maine coast	office buildings
early spring	the American Legion
aspirin	television
porpoise	Pac-Man
some conversation	most conversation
Pope John XXIII	Pope John Paul II
wit	franchise
birds	John Cage
Chinese acrobats	Saturday Night Live
Einstein	$E = mc^2$

Xmas Shopping Guide

THE GIFT OF DOGS story this year concerns a Glenwood Springs couple who went out on the Colorado River to run the rapids. They took along Bo, their nine-month-old Labrador pup (chocolate brown). The dory capsized, trapping under it the woman and the dog. "Every time I tried to escape from under the boat my head hit it," she said later. "I struck bottom several times and realized I was drowning." What her husband, who had swum ashore (yes), saw was the dog emerge from under the dory . . . then turn around and dive back underneath it. Moments later he reappeared, towing the woman by the hair. To shore, safely of course. There was this year Lenny Skutnik, who as a passerby dove into Chesapeake Bay to save people when that plane hit a bridge. I would that Bo were his dog.

A XMAS STORY. There were three teenage vandals—Eggo, Ignor, and Selfie. Escaped from reform school where they were model prisoners, which is to say that they were a role model for others, both inmates and guards. They made their way westward to Los Angeles. A waitress at a truck stop had tipped them, instead of vice-versa. "L.A. is your spirchal home," she said. "I been there, take it from me." Used to either worshiping or wiping out Authority, they found themselves in this instance struck dumb with Belief. Lives have turned on lesser accidents.

When they found out how right she was they sent her a postcard, one of those Conventioneer cards that comes on dirty and then ducks, giving the women back home a giggle, like where the cartooned guy is showing the boobs-and-buns girl how big something is but it turns out he's talking about fishing. Cute. Communicative.

Looking for Hollywood in east Los Angeles they got into a fight with some Mexican kids. Who couldn't beat up skinny Mexican kids? They couldn't. When the cops arrived, Ignor was the only one who knew what to do. He showed the cops what happened. He bopped Eggo on the nose, and making a knife of his finger he ran it into Selfie's chest, breaking it (the finger). Selfie staggered back into Eggo and they both fell down. Ignor raised his arms like Sylvester Stallone. The cops laughed and laughed, said these kids were better than the Ritz brothers. Said they ought to be in the movies.

The kids thought so too, so on the way out of the hospital they asked the janitor where Hollywood was, especially the Cheech and Chong building. Told they needed an act, they looked at each other. Selfie solved it. He bopped Eggo on the nose, Eggo stuck his finger in Ignor's eye. Ignor cried out of the other eye. "He can cry out of only one eye!" Cinch said. "Fabuloso," E. Cop Coppola said. They were signed up, marked down, and fit in. Hair blown-dry, toes straightened, they appeared in Godfather films IV through VII and on Real People.

Fame came. They were asked for their opinion. "On what?" they asked.

"Anything," was the answer.

"Equality!" Ignor said. "I like that. That's where it's at. That's my opinion, if you want to know. It's as simple as that."

"No," Selfie said, "first let's see the quick pro quo."

"As for me," Eggo said, "I'm running for office and I'm running alone. It's the loneliness of the long-distance number." He dropped a kilo of cocaine on the floor and did his soft shoe dance. "It's as simple as that," he said.

"Sure it is," Ignor said. "Where are these elections, anyway?"

"Follow me," Selfie said. He took them to a television studio.

They were soon signed up to run for office on the Equal Equality ticket. With strong support from Sweden, China, and Zimbabwe they were all elected members-at-large (dirty jokes followed) of the Interna-

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tional Economic Peacekeeping Council.

"Let it all trickle down," Eggo says.

"At this point in time," Ignor says.

"Hopefully," Selfie says.

Go to sleep now. Santa is coming.

NEXT CHRISTMAS. Santa Claus and Christmas. Wonderful ideas. Common things: a sock and a chimney, warm red flannel. The reassuring tinkle of sleigh bells. Vrushka and Donki safely home, not a wolf met in the forest. Snow is stars and stars are snow. Cripples are healed, and the Child lies in the lighted manger. Most uncommon: something for nothing, three wise men and three bags full. Presents! Gifts! Toys! Puddings and browning birds, songs and whiskey, stories. Christ was born and I get gifts. That's an idea worth being born to. Plus a sleigh in the sky, rising up like E.T. might be driving. Sliding down the chimney like a ray of light, down the bannister from Space, in a red suit, no, that's wrong. A silver suit, and he's not fat and he's not here to fill socks, for crying out loud. He's coming down because he's coming down. From outer space, see? Maybe to tell us something. Weird looking. He comes in this machine, driven by light. Just by light! No sound to it. You see it coming, little by little, and it gets so big you can't believe it, and then it sets down, blazing. Someone's going to come out, he's coming out. There's so much light you can't see. What's going to happen? What's he going to DO?

POST ELECTION political analysis kept speaking of the country's 'mind.' Presumably this mind had just finished voting against Reaganomics but not against Reagan, against the effect but not the cause. This kind of electoral logic is not unusual. It reasons that since I voted for him, *he* isn't to blame. Even Watergate wasn't enough for some people's disinclination to disavow their choice of Nixon. A country has a mood, votes its feelings. The fabled electoral mind exists because mind-people write political analysis. Most of us know better. We vote for Christmas, and hope it comes.

—Kenneth Lash

ROBIN A. CLARK

GOING UP

An efficient man toiled high in a glass cubicle.

Hour upon hour, day upon year.

His wife sought love in a stranger's arms.

His children struggled to please him.

Men fought for his job.

He kicked the dog.

One night he worked at his desk.

A cup of coffee steamed at his right hand.

Seven sharp pencils lay at his elbow.

The phone rang.

He picked it up.

This is the Angel of Death, said a voice.

The who? said the man.

The Angel of Death. Your time has come.

You're supposed to come in person.

So, I put my back out yesterday. Today I'm phoning them in.

The man slammed the phone down.

His heart fluttered.

It stopped.

He watched his body as he rose.

His nose was in the coffee.

Saint Peter leaned on a podium-shaped cloud in front of two wrought iron gates.

One guarded an escalator marked Up.

The other opened to a stairway marked Oops.

Saint Peter smiled at the man.

Welcome, he said.

Thank you, said the man.

Saint Peter pulled a sheaf of notes out of the cloud.

You were cold, said Saint Peter.

That's true, the man said.

You were thoughtless.

I was.

You ignored your family.

I see that now.

Why should I let you in?

I see you're reading from notes, said the man.

My memory isn't what it used to be. So tell me, why should I let you in?

I was cold because I chose to be.

That's usually the case.

I was impotent. My wife will be happier with her lover.

I'll have to check her files.

My money will allow them to live well.

Accounting will verify that.

In fighting for my job all these years, the people under me found a purpose in life.

That's not my department.

My children will rise to great heights because they sought to please me.

I'll check with futures. You did kick the dog.

True.

So why should I let you in?

The man walked to the stairway.

Where are you going, yelled Saint Peter. I haven't assigned you yet.

The man turned back to Saint Peter. You have a very self-righteous attitude about this whole thing. I'll be more at home down there.

Self-righteous? said Saint Peter. You think so?

Check your files, said the man.

Saint Peter walked to the man. He pressed his notes into the man's hands, squeezed by him and down the stairway.

Your replacement will be along soon, he said as he descended.

The man walked to the podium.

Next. □

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VAN K. BROCK

THE SURVIVOR

(To Viktor Frankl and Martin Buber:
for the songs.)

You want me to make a speech?
Yes, I survived. Some of the best
Did not. What's worse:
Nightmares or their absence?
Sometimes I talk without stopping.
Specters conspire for my life,
Threatening me with prophecies:
"Make meaning of sacrifice."
Sacrifice? For what? Each found
Something to suffice or nothing
To survive for. One man recited
Songs he had made out of teeth.

There were two blooms on that bough
And a woman who went up in smoke
Looked out from this hut and said,
"I often talk to that tree."
"And does it reply?" I asked.
"Yes, it says, 'I am here.
I am life. Eternal life.' "
"Ah! *Lebensraum*," I laughed.

Since no man wanted to hear,
The Chinese poet played
To the gods on his jade flute,
Then men inclined an ear.
So do these grim forms
Long for men to clasp them—
And though on a flute of bone
Are not for the gods alone.

Then later he fell into silence.
There are silences heavier than stone.
None knows to whom they belong
Or for or from whom they are kept.

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ERICA LIEDERMAN

THE NOVITIATE

She saw him for the first time out of the corner of her eye from where she sat, her back resting against the vinyl cushion of the booth. Outside the sun shone resplendently against the broad stripe of white sidewalk and the glass front of the cafe so that those who peered into the dim cafe to see if anybody they knew was there, had to squint and shade their eyes in order to render transparent the obstruction of their reflected selves.

That was how Christine first saw Warren, his brown beard pressed against the glass, his hand above his brow, squinting.

He did not sit down at her booth, even though the cafe was quite crowded and there were few empty seats, nor did he even look at her as he strode by her table. Nor did she look long at him, but continued to stare at her English grammar text, or rather the plump back of her hand which covered the words she was trying to remember: the perfect and plus quam perfect of the verb "to awaken." A waitress in a floor-length denim skirt held a pot of coffee toward her inquiringly. Awaken, awoke. Christine looked up at the ceiling and then closed her eyes. Awake, awoke, She opened them and began surreptitiously to glance down at the page from which she had removed her hand. Her eyes met the white expanse. No. She slammed the book closed. The pages slapping together resounded throughout the cafe. No cheating.

Awoken. She looked up, smiling, and then blushed as petty triumph became embarrassment: the man with the beard was staring at her ponderously and unabashed from the bench at the other end of the room where a number of men played chess, frowning over the immensity of their imagined battles.

"A rare quality," he remarked exactly a week later when by some gesture of fate they were introduced by mutual friends. "To be able to blush so ingenuously in this day and age is truly unusual." He leaned slightly back on his heels, holding a drink in his hand, his bearded chin jutting outwards as he spoke, his legs spread apart as if to give himself the greatest fundament possible. She did not then know what "ingenuously" meant but assumed it was a compliment and smiled.

He invited her to a concert in the city that same week, then on a picnic in the nearby hills overlooking the town the week following.

"The right mixture of nature and culture is an absolute necessity," he said, resting a burly hiking boot against an outcropping of rock on the hillside. He had removed his shirt in the heat and the late afternoon sun glimmered in the beads of sweat which clung to the reddish hair on his chest and arms. That was when she decided she was going to marry him. He sat down next to her on the plaid blanket they had brought to protect their

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bare legs from the prickly hillside, upon which they had consumed their picnic and later consummated their . . . love, perhaps?

"Yes. Love," she thought to herself later on. She had never before met a man who could discourse so learnedly on several subjects one day and climb a mountain and stand sweating thickly and unselfconsciously like the plainest peasant on another. He was unfettered in a way that men she had known in Europe were not. And she did not think that it was merely the rustic appeal of a man who was both educated and knew how to work with his hands. He had at one time worked as a lumberman: he told her this on their picnic and she had no trouble picturing him wielding an axe and watching trees in a forest crash down at his feet.

Warren Jonas' primary goal as an anthropologist and a man was to understand mankind, he told Christine on the evening he asked her to marry him. She believed that he would and could, although she did have occasion to reflect one day, after she had moved into his apartment, whether anybody who kept a poster with the dictionary definition of "love" printed in oversized purple type above his bed really understood anything at all.

To Christine, understanding was an elusive creature, like some rare moth, always concealing and camouflaging itself whenever sought out: she herself rarely attempted to understand anything—at least by Warren's definition of understanding—and lived her life from day to day from place to place wondering only vaguely what would happen next.

She had been brought up in Belgium behind the stained-glass confinement of Catholicism. She had considered entering a convent at the age of twenty, but had been discouraged by the mother superior who had explained patiently that entering the sisterhood meant a commitment, an eternal vow, not something done because there seemed to be nothing else.

"But I do believe," Christine had argued. "I do love the Lord."

"It has not only to do with belief, in the end," had been the reply, "but with your whole life. Life for you must not even exist outside of serving God. Is there something besides the Lord in your life?" She had held out her hands, palms up, not in a shrug but in a simple Thomist gesture. And Christine had to admit there was: for her, life occurred everywhere but where she happened to be at the moment. Her own life was a dull gray pond extending placidly around her in all directions, bestirred now and then by pebbles kicked in by passers-by. She had never really been anywhere before she went to America and met Warren; the only places her family ever went on vacation were one or another of the North Sea beachside resorts, where the monotony of the central European industrial landscape gave way to recumbent white shore stretching endlessly to either side. They never wanted to go anywhere else, it never occurred to them to go anywhere else. Which was why they were surprised and even Christine herself was surprised at how easy it was when she called her family overseas to tell them that she was married to an anthropologist, that she was going to Africa and that her new name, as bequeathed upon her that afternoon in a civil court where petty criminals waited beside them in the same room for the services of the same judge, was Christine Jonas. And at either end of the umbilicus of telephone line which stretched miraculously between the old world and the new, parents and daughter wavered as they spoke between anger and apathy, which became, as soon as the phone was replaced on the hook and the connection cut, a feeling of mutual ceasing-to-exist, as if in her parent's world of manners and history, Christine had never been born and, in her world of emancipation, there had never been such a thing as parents or past at all.

2.

They drove westward out of the city, not through desert and jungle as Christine had expected but through yellow savannah where zebra and gazelle grazed side by side in the shade of plane trees. Termite mounds protruded upwards like brown fists on the horizon, as if reaching up to grasp something out of the air. They drove for three hours along a two-lane highway, passing no one. Then they turned onto an unmarked path.

The terrain changed dramatically the moment they left the main road. Trees and vines grew so thickly that at times the narrow road seemed to disappear altogether just around a bend. Leafy branches of unfamiliar trees twined overhead, enclosing them in places inside a domed corridor which reminded Christine of some of the hallways in the cloister. White and orange trumpet flowers grew along the road bank, their blossoms larger than the face of a grown man. Here and there the inverted cone of a thatched roof was visible between the trees.

It was dark by the time they arrived at the small fieldstone house. The wall-eyed professor who had met them at the airport halted the car beside a tin shed.

"The generator," he explained to Christine, "we leave it off when no one is here." And as Christine walked up the short incline to the house, accompanied by the mechanical overture of the generator rumbling into life, she felt suddenly as if she had in fact entered the order, or some order where life was determined not by prayer or benediction but by field notes and the supply of halizone tablets for the water.

There were not many people on the road the first day Christine went with Warren to the village. A few women with huge loads of wood or thatch on their backs, balanced with a leather strap around their foreheads, turned and waved as they drove by. Some of the heads were actually misshapen from years and years of carrying.

"How would you like to haul that?" asked Warren, pointing to one of them.

"I'm not strong enough," replied Christine.

"Lucky for you you're not." They had come to a clearing between two terraced hills. Christine put her hand on Warren's sleeve.

"Stop."

"What?"

"Stop the car."

"What is it?" Warren slammed his foot on the brake so

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that the Rover skidded a few feet. The road ahead of them was dotted with puddles of various sizes around whose edges congregated hundreds of butterflies—reds, violets, azures, ochres—sipping at the pools of water like living gems on an encrusted goblet. Christine climbed out of the car and stood for a few moments, looking at them.

"Was that the only reason you had me stop?" Warren got out of the Rover and stood beside her, his hands on his hips.

"Why does one never see this sort of thing in Europe?" marveled Christine, kneeling to get a closer look. But as she did so, she lost her balance and fell backward, crushing four of the creatures into an iridescent pulp with her buttock and three more with the heel of her hand. Butterflies rose in an opalescent cloud around her, as if some phantom had just been born out of the mire on the road. They dispersed into the air and past the trees, disappearing between the cleft in the hills like versi-colored stars, leaving behind the impression of barren landscape in a world now bereft of complexion.

"You're certainly a mess." Warren shook his head. "We might as well walk from here," he said. "We couldn't drive much further anyway."

"Where are we going?"

"To visit a friend."

"Oh," said Christine. She walked a few paces ahead of her husband. A patch of luminous blue still clung to the seat of her safari pants and glimmered rhythmically with her every step.

They walked up the road and turned onto a narrow path. Warren's camera bounced gently against his chest as he walked and snagged once on a jagged branch. The path grew narrower and narrower, and the foliage denser and thicker so that the usual daylight became something of a green dusk, as if they were swimming in very deep water. Invisible birds warbled from somewhere within the dense tangle and a brown mongoose ran across the path just in front of their feet.

They arrived at a clearing cultivated with banana palms, maize plants and cassava mounds. A fence constructed partly of woven willow rods and partly of briar and acacia bushes enclosed a compound to one side. Passion fruit vines with crown-of-thorn flowers encircled the rough-hewn gatepost. Flame trees, just beginning their seasonal blush, stood on the opposite side of the clearing, veiled delicately by light gray smoke that furled out of the conical thatched rooves within the compound.

Warren untwisted the wire holding the gate in place. A flock of chickens scattered as they entered and two pariah dogs ran up to them, fawning, but were shooed away with a well-placed stone by one of the children playing in the yard. They laughed when the dog yelped and laughed again as Christine and Warren approached. Flies covered the eyes and mouths of the babies like dark netting. The older children brushed the tiny faces now and then with a discursive wave of the hand but the flies always returned and settled once again. Christine recoiled as a small child, his legs enormous with edema, toddled up to her. She had never noticed the grotesqueries of nature in her native Belgium, neatly hidden as they were behind a curtain of technology, and it was not until this, her first day in the village, that she realized they existed, like the stone gargoyles on her town church, only living.

For the first few months she was there, Christine accompanied Warren on his researches, carrying extra note pads and pencils in her rear pocket. She would wait outside huts while her husband interviewed those within. Sometimes she would be invited inside to drink sweet, cloudy tea. She would sit quietly and listen and watch Warren, sitting in a hut beside a fire, his bearded chin jutting forward purposefully, his clip-board in his lap. He collected data as if they were relics and delighted in them like a small boy who had been out collecting shells on some exotic shore. Pretty things they were, facts: solid, sure, to be sorted and held, arranged in neatly cross-referenced rows. She could not fathom why it mattered what he wrote down; the world as she envisioned it was just a place where people lived.

Then Christine began to spend her afternoons with Lydia Ashoge. Lydia taught her how to weave sisal baskets and which beans were to be consumed when one was single, married, pregnant, old, fitful or phlegmatic.

Gradually, Christine began to learn the language. She could now converse a bit but like a child, only about objects in the room and people who were present: when Lydia first told her about her husband K'angethe's plan to have his two eleven-year-old daughters circumcised, Christine did not know what Lydia meant.

"You shouldn't talk about these things to the European," said Anne Nyambura, K'angethe's second wife. "It will make our husband angry."

"He is mad," said Lydia. "He has to be stopped."

"You still shouldn't tell her," said Anne. "It's bad luck."

But it could not have mattered: Christine still did not understand. That evening, she asked Warren about it.

"Clitoridectomy," he said, putting his papers on the coffee table. He chewed on the end of his pencil. "You simply cut off the clitoris. That's how women are circumcised. Solve the chastity problem forever. No pleasure, no adultery."

"Easy for you to be jolly about it."

"I am not being jolly about it. Can you imagine how it must be to make love to a woman who lies there like a board?"

"I'd prefer not to."

"Who is having women circumcised? It's hardly ever done anymore. They still circumcise boys, of course, as part of the initiation rite, but not girls, never girls. Who is having women circumcised?"

"K'angethe. Lydia Ashoge told me. Her daughter and Anne Nyambura's daughter are the ones."

"Any others?"

"All of Lydia's other children are boys. I don't think there are any others of that age. No one has had it done to them since Lydia and Anne converted."

"The word is 'clitoridectomize.' "

"I don't care what word it is."

"Calm down," said Warren. "Do you know why he's decided to do this all of a sudden?"

Christine shrugged. "Christianity is killing his goats. I don't know."

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"Come now."

"The ancestors are angry and his goats are dying. Don't ask me."

"You really should find out more about this. It's quite fascinating, this whole issue of revitalizing a custom that has almost died out. You could get together your own little article. I'll be glad to help you. You might have a section about rites of passage, how they have changed."

"You mean you think I ought simply to let it happen?"

"You're not planning to meddle, now, are you?"

"But they don't want it."

"Who doesn't want it?" Warren put down his pencil and clasped his hands.

"The women. Lydia and Anne."

"You're not going to interfere, are you?"

"What if they ask me to?"

"If they asked . . ." Warren's knuckles were white against his ruddy hands. "If they ask you to, you simply refuse your assistance."

"What if I want to give it?"

"I forbid you to give it." She looked away from him, into the fire. "We are here as guests, Christine, not to tamper with these people's lives."

"Guests," echoed Christine. She leaned her chin on her hands, staring into the red flames. "As guests? Or as voyeurs?"

Christine visited Lydia the following afternoon. Anne Nyambura was there, and Florence Wanjiku, K'angethe's youngest wife, a beautiful but stupid girl of nineteen. She wore a magenta turban on her shapely head and carried her first baby in her arms.

"What have you decided to do?" Christine asked Lydia.

"I am going to do what is right," said Lydia.

"Oh," said Florence, "so you are going to defy our husband? So that we'll all be beaten?"

"Sometimes one has to defy one's husband," said Christine. "If he's wrong about something."

Florence tittered. "Of course she would think so," she said, turning tohAnne Nyambura, "since she never obeys her husband, not even in bed. She doesn't even have any children." Anne Nyambura laughed and covered her mouth with her hand. Florence giggled girlishly. The baby in her lap smiled.

There was a crack like a whipshot as Lydia Ashoge struck Florence in the face. The baby in her lap began to cry, reacting, as babies always do, to unspoken tension in the air.

"Perhaps," said Christine, standing up, "perhaps I ought to leave."

"Not until you've had some tea," said Lydia. "Florence Wanjiku will go to her house and make you a cup of tea since her fire is already lit. Anne Nyambura will fetch the girls. They are out milking. I would like them to meet you. They are both learning English in school." Lydia lifted the baby out of Florence's arms and jiggled it to still its tears. Her face looked aged beside his full cheeks, like some ancient, crinkled palimpsest beside a summer fruit.

"Anne Nyambura will fetch the girls," repeated Lydia. The younger woman had not moved. "And she will do it immediately before I slap her as well." Anne Nyambura stood and strode out of the hut, banging the door with such force that a bit of wattle crumbled from the wall onto the hard packed earth of the floor. Florence followed closely behind her, barely slowing to pluck the baby out of Lydia's arms.

"When is it supposed to take place?" asked Christine.

"Tomorrow night," said Lydia. "There is supposed to be a week's confinement beforehand, but K'angethe wanted this done quickly. He doesn't want anyone to know."

"I could help," said Christine. "They could come stay with me for a few days. Then maybe you would have more time to change his mind."

"Perhaps." There were voices outside the door—K'angethe's and the high, girlish chortle of Florence Wanjiku.

"Tell them to meet me at dusk where the path meets the road," said Christine. "I will wait for them there."

Later that afternoon, Christine waited for her husband beside the hedge which surrounded the mission. At the corner, the bushes were oddly shaped. They had been trimmed and trained over sixteen years of diligent pruning to resemble lumpy turrets, or rather the missionary's gardener's notion of turrets which had been formed mostly by pictures from a travel leaflet he had seen once and never quite forgotten.

Christine watched the Land Rover approach in a cloud of roaring, red dust which seemed, as the heat waves rose liquidly before it, more like a muddy wave than particles suspended in air. Father Anderson appeared just as the car came to a stop.

"Perfect timing," he remarked as Warren walked up. "I was going to invite you in for a cup of tea."

"Thank you," said Christine, "but we don't exactly have time and—"

"Of course we have time," interjected Warren. "What sort of late-afternoon commitment could we possibly have all the way out here?"

"But I have to—"

"Have to what?" asked Warren, taking her hand and smiling down at her. "What do you have to do?" Father Anderson laughed and Warren chuckled and pushed open the gate to the mission yard.

"Christine?"

"What?" She turned to Warren, who sat looking at her quizzically from the other side of Father Anderson's parlor. She had been gazing out the window at the hills in the distance the entire time the two men were speaking and hadn't noticed Father Anderson addressing her.

"Father Anderson was curious about your past. I mentioned to him that you had considered entering the order. I told him that you didn't because you would never have looked good in a wimple," Warren smiled teasingly, "but that I suspected there were other reasons as well."

"Mrs. Jonas seems rather preoccupied at the moment."

"Is there something wrong, Christine?"

"No," she replied, looking at the floor. "I was just supposed to meet somebody, that's all."

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"Why didn't you say something sooner?"

"I don't know," said Christine.

"Whom are you meeting?"

Christine was silent for a moment, wondering if she should lie, or if she could lie even if she wanted to.

"Two girls." She stood up and held out her hand. "May I have the keys to the Rover, please? I can fetch them and come back here."

"Whom are you meeting?"

She was silent for a moment.

"Who?"

"Two girls."

"I don't suppose they happen to be the daughters of a certain K'angethe?"

She stood silently, unflinching, her blonde hair framing her cheek, one hand extended like some Greek statue, in an attitude of supplication and perhaps accusation as well; she herself did not know which.

"Forgive me for interrupting," said Father Anderson, "but it may interest you to know that Lydia Ashoge came to speak with me yesterday about a certain ethical issue. She wanted to know how I felt about involving a third party . . . in a domestic issue."

"It's not exactly domestic."

"Yes," said Father Anderson. "I know."

"What would you do if you were in my place?"

"All I can say," he said after a moment, "is that we," he gestured, as if to include the church, himself and all religion, "we are opposed to it. Whether you get involved is another matter. That is between you and your conscience."

"Husband," corrected Christine.

"I do not believe," said Warren, his voice rose to a higher pitch, "regardless of my own feelings about this, that I am in any way justified in tampering with indigenous culture. How I feel personally about circumcision has nothing to do with this."

"It should," said Christine.

"I personally think it despicable and barbaric," continued Warren. His eyes met Christine's above the coffee table.

"If that's what you think, then you ought to try to stop it. There should be no dilemma."

"That's not the point, Christine."

"What is it, then?"

"I don't want to alienate these people. You could infuriate an entire clan and make us their enemies. It is their custom you're talking about. Ours you can fool with, not theirs."

"You just don't want your test-tube contaminated."

"Damn it, Christine." He stood up, looking at her fiercely.

"What would you do if they suddenly decided that castration was part of their culture? Would you act any differently?" Then she remembered that Father Anderson was still present; they were still in his house. Warren stood and slung his camera over his shoulder. "I think it's time for us to go."

"Excuse me for speaking, Mr. Jonas, but I do think your wife's point is a valid one," said Father Anderson, also standing, and folding his arms. "What is the use of being in the world if not to change what is wrong and preserve what is right?"

"I have never believed in making those judgments," said Warren. "No one has the right to make that sort of judgment."

"My whole vocation is based on those judgments," he replied. "I may not always be right, but I do try." He paused. "Civilization itself is based on those judgments."

"I have never believed in proselytizing." Warren turned to Christine. "We ought to be going. I think it's going to rain and the road will be soup."

"It's not a matter of proselytizing, Mr. Jonas. It is a matter of ethics."

Warren walked briskly out to the car, his camera swinging against his side. Christine followed. She could see Father Anderson in the rear-view mirror as they drove off, reflected dimly, watching them from his porch, until his figure was eclipsed, as they drew further away, by the rough green of the hills and the dull light of the cloud-decked sun sinking beyond them. It began to drizzle as they drove up the road, and as they sped past the place where the path to K'angethe's compound met the road, Christine saw, or thought she saw, the two girls, still waiting, standing beside a dripping thicket of vines in the twilight.

"Two-hundred," said Warren, lisping around a pencil clenched between his teeth. It was evening. He sat in the armchair beside the fire, his clip-board in his lap. "Remember the number two-hundred." A drop of spittle fell on his beard.

"I don't know how you can just sit there." Christine sat on the couch opposite him. "That's the one thing I will never understand about you." A bushbaby, which Lydia Ashoge's middle son had given to Christine the month before, sat on the mantel, his gray bottle-brush tail twitching, his droll round eyes fixed on the pencil, waiting for it to dance into motion on the paper once again.

"I can sit here," replied Warren, not looking up, "because I, unlike you, am not flailing." Firelight colored his mustache orange and his beard flickered dark umber in contrast.

"Seventy-eight and one-hundred. Remember the number one-hundred." He balanced a coded sheet precariously on his knee. It was covered with check marks and hieroglyphics that looked to Christine from where she sat to be no more profound than chicken-scratchings in wet earth. Warren put down the pencil for a moment and looked at her. "I don't know why you're doing this, Christine. You're no more a part of them than I am." He picked up the pencil once again. "Five-hundred-three. Remember that. Five-oh-three."

Neither of them noticed a delicate pat-patting on the windows. The bushbaby did and sat up, his paws poised in front of his chest, his paper-thin ears quivering.

"Remember one-oh-two." Warren peered at his notes. "And sixty-five."

Then Christine noticed the sound, pat-pat-pat, like leaves rubbing against each other in the slightest wind, except that it was too regular, too continuous, too close.

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"What was that?"

"What was what?" Warren looked up.

The bushbaby leaped from the mantelpiece to the curtain rod. An insect with long, white wings circled the ceiling lamp. It hit the shade now and then, making a sound like paper rattling in the breeze. Then there was another, then there were several, appearing as if out of the air. They circled the light in uneven, drunken ellipses.

"What are those insects? Where are they coming from?"

The bushbaby jumped back to the mantel, in an effort to calculate the best angle of attack. There was a cloud of them now, and even though all the windows and doors were closed, they seeped in—through key holes, under the door and through chinks in the woodwork.

Warren twisted in his chair, reaching for his glasses on the coffee table with one hand, trying to keep his place marked with the other. "Why is the light getting so funny in here?"

"Those bugs."

"Where?" He peered at the ceiling. "Oh. White flies. They come out when the long rains start. They're harmless, except that they get disgusting when they begin shedding their wings. Don't pay any attention to them." He returned to his notes. "What was that number I told you to remember?"

"There are at least fifty now." She went over to the window to make sure it was closed, then to the door and pushed the rug into the gap underneath.

"Couldn't be. It was in the hundreds."

The bushbaby had captured two of the bugs. He sat on his haunches in epicurean bliss, holding one in his paw, the end of a white wing hanging limply from his mouth.

"Where are they coming from?" Christine ran into the study, then into the bedroom. All the windows were closed but it was like trying to keep smoke out of the eyes. They found every chink and crevice, they billowed and swarmed like clouds in a storm. She stuffed a bit of paper into the keyhole and another into a minute crack beside the door jamb, where the bugs squeezed in, single file, one after another.

"They're attracted to the light." She flipped off the switch, but there were already too many for it to make any difference.

"Why did you do that?" Warren looked up.

"The insects." She picked up a broom and began batting wildly at the white swarms, hitting some into the fire and scattering the rest.

"Stop it, will you? That won't help anything." He rose and strode over to her and tried to seize the broom. They grappled for a moment in the diffuse firelight. The insects had begun to shed their wings and the floor became coated with a pallid attritus. Then Christine let go of the broom, relinquishing it to her husband with a suddenness that sent him reeling, and ran to the door.

"I'm going outside," she said. "If the outside is coming in, I'm going out." It had begun to rain lightly. She ran across the drive and sat down at the base of a eucalyptus tree, letting the rain plaster her hair to her face and her blouse to her body, and wondering whether this were really happening to her or whether it was happening to someone else and she was just looking on.

Christine did not go to the village the next day, nor the day after, nor the day after that. She sat in the living room in front of the fire, trying to think about anything else. But she could envision only a single image: the circumcision; the two girls kneeling on the floor in Lydia's hut in the firelight, biting their lips to keep from screaming as the hand-wrought knife, trembling in the medicine woman's unsteady hand, pierced the flesh of their delicate parts. The scenario would not dissipate or fade: it repeated itself like the theme in a fugue, over and over again. Outside it rained in an incessant, steady drizzle.

A week later, she went to the village.

Lydia Ashoge met her at the gate to the compound. Her daughter had died of an infection two days before. Anne Nyambura's daughter had recovered. Lydia was not angry, not at Christine, not at Anne Nyambura, who had told their husband about the plan to save the girls, and not at her husband who had subsequently beaten her with a fly-whisk made of giraffe tail.

"It happens," she said. "Sometimes they develop fevers afterwards. Sometimes they die from them. Perhaps it was a sin to try to prevent it. Perhaps God is punishing me." She seemed neither sad nor remorseful, just somehow deflated, as if all the will had been drained from her.

Christine did not stay long, even though Lydia invited her for tea; she felt awkward and did not know what to do with her hands.

Christine walked up the muddy road away from the village. Rain flattened her scarf to her head and the glutinous surface of the road sucked noisily at her shoes. Mud collected on her trousers so that they felt clammy against her skin, like the fungi that grow on decaying wood. She heard the Rover rumble up beside her. It halted a few feet away and she climbed in, not looking at her husband. She sat cross-legged on the seat beside him, squeezing the dampness out of her trouser leg.

"Did you see Lydia?" he asked finally.

"Yes."

"How are the girls?"

"Lydia's daughter died. She got an infection afterward and died."

The anticipation in Warren's voice faded. "Oh. I'm sorry." Christine removed her shoe and wrung out her sock onto the floor. "Christine," he repeated, leaning his arm over the steering wheel, "I'm truly sorry." He touched her hand. "Here." He took the sock from her, wrung it out the window and handed it back to her. "I have to do what I think is right too, Christine." He paused. "And I am sorry, whether you choose to believe me or not. I didn't want the girl to die. I didn't think she would die. Tell Lydia for me that I am sorry."

"So you are," said Christine tonelessly. "So you may well be."

3.

There was no question that Warren's scholarly efforts would be rewarded. He had received a cable, dispatched

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COLETTE INEZ

SYLVIA AND ANNE

What would I have given once
for Anne's linen dresses
with deep hems, Grandmother's
letters from European capitals,
for Sylvia's mother in a white,
frame house, the early awards?

A cocoon of alphabets to start
the flight of new words, newly
drawn lines, a lexicon of
astonishments, the joining of
names: Annesyl and Sylanne,
not queen of dolor nor lady
of frets, not autumn's slump
and winter's gasp magnified into
death by carbon monoxide and gas.

And what to trade for Sylvia's
bees and Anne's word games in a buzz
of New England afternoons, for all
the daughters, Linda, Frieda, Joy
soft as the plume of Anne's brown hair,
as Sylvia's blond wave helplessly falling
down the side of her face?

No swap can be made when I live, light
on my face, on my dog-eared books. Less
privileged only at the start, I gain
what they lost: these sun-riddled days
of sizing up the odds, and knowing
it might have gone the other way.

from the capital, that a special symposium was to be held upon his return to America, a symposium created because of his research. That was what Africa was for him, she thought as she watched a black dung beetle, the unsung Sisyphus of the bush country, thrust his burden up the path beside them: the exemplification of his own cleverness, nothing more, nothing less. A thing he could cite with pride. He had done all that could be done with his data: analyzed, added, divided and converted them by some mathematical ritual into a neat quantity which could be easily digested by the circuit-boarded innards of a statistical computer in America.

They were to leave the following morning on a final journey before returning home, to a place in the Aberdares. They would have left sooner, had it not been for the chief who had decided suddenly to re-marry his first wife in an orthodox ceremony: she had never had the benefit of a Christian wedding. The ceremony was to take place that Sunday with Father Anderson presiding and the chief's seven daughters dressed in blue frocks and carrying bouquets of white carnations.

Warren and Christine departed early and drove for miles, stopping once at a lake that was pink with flamingos, then again at a hotel near Kericho where they sat in a parlor and silently ate tea sandwiches and cake. Then they came to mountains which seemed to rise straight up out of the plain. Christine opened her window as they began their ascent and breathed in the moist air: it was like inhaling through a sponge. She could hear colobus clicking their tongues against their teeth in chiding exhortation as they drove past. Fronds and spires of mountain ferns and vines formed a soft webbing beside the road. Thick damp branches arched overhead like darkened vaulted beams or outstretched arms. Then the forest opened suddenly in front of them. The road ended several yards down from a ridge which was sparsely treed with ebony and betel-nut.

They walked to the precipice and stood, looking down into a verdant valley completely enclosed by the sides of the mountain. A river meandered at the bottom as if painted there with a fine brush.

Warren peered into the valley through a pair of binoculars.

"I see two rhinos, a few zebra, a herd, maybe ten wildebeest." He handed the glasses to Christine. "Hold these. I want to change the lens on my camera." She let the glasses dangle by the strap around her neck and watched her husband for a moment.

"Damn," he said, "I'll have to go get the wide-angle. The threads on this must be stripped." He made his way down the incline. There was a rustling nearby. A bird flew out of a thick coppice of briar and tamarisk further up the ridge. A cape buffalo emerged from the thicket, its slate-gray horns sweeping outward like some elaborate coiffure. A tick bird sat in one of them, a live ornament, flapping to keep its balance. The animal's hooves struck the ground as it galloped past and on into the forest, leaving deep imprints of cloven hooves in the soft turf.

"I've got the lens," said Warren, coming up beside her. "Let me take a picture of you standing there. Turn around and smile, Christine."

She did not turn, but took a step closer to the edge.

"I wish I could go down there."

"That's silly, you can't. There's no way out," came Warren's voice from behind the camera. "Turn this way."

She imagined herself placing a booted foot carefully over the ledge. It was not as steep as it looked and was rutted with sturdy roots and shrubs. It was probably no more dangerous than climbing down a ladder.

"I wish I could." She looked down and began an imaginary descent, hand over hand, foot over foot, looking only downwards at the river and the green grass as they drew closer and closer and the rim and her husband grew further and further away.

"Turn this way," said Warren again. And she did, because there was no other way to turn, and smiled into the waiting lens of the camera. □

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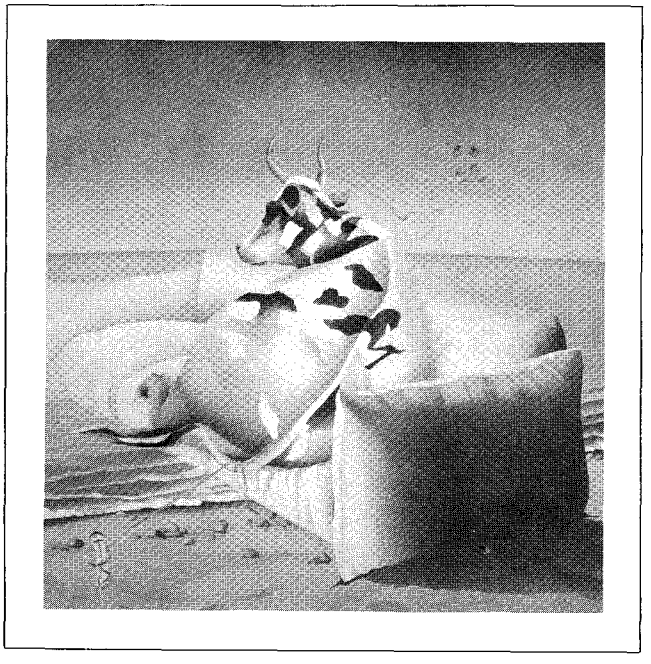
ERIC K. GOODMAN

SCHWARTZ AND MARGARET, TERRIFIED



They were young and in love. That is, Schwartz was young, Margaret was 34. But Schwartz was an arranger, streetwise in a way he knew Margaret would never be. He'd wooed her, found them the farm for the summer. The soul of a 70-year-old, she'd kid him. And joked to friends, laughter escaping her throat to catch in wrinkle-edged eyes, which, she insisted, pouting (to Schwartz, love-crazed, she looked 14, 4, 34, who knew), were annoyingly shaped, ordinary, not blue but smog gray.

After 14 months of Schwartz and Margaret, Margaret and Schwartz (Mom called him Ivan. To the rest of the world, including his father, Schwartz was Schwartz, pure and simple), no one bothered about their ages. Not even Margaret's colleagues, who'd assumed he was a graduate student. At dinner parties, the graybeards didn't know whether to shake Schwartz' hand or ask him to mix drinks. They learned. Schwartz knew how to make his meaning clear.

Schwartz' meaning: Love mattered, age didn't.

He winked in the rearview. Schwartz was returning after four days in New York. Big news—the Met's curator of photography had bought four of his prints. Fame, and at $200 per, fortune enough to last the summer. Everyone said Schwartz was talented, offbeat enough to be interesting, and of course, extremely ambitious. He'd published his first book before he was 25: hand-crafted toy soldiers shot close and soft-focused against soap-flaked backdrops, miniature trainyards and frozen tundra; Schwartz' version of Hitler's Russian winter campaign, man as toy soldier. Unfortunately, the book didn't sell. But prints did. Slowly, but sold, enough that with part-time teaching, and an occasional commercial assignment (four hundred shots of beer frothing over a mug lip; the search, Jesus Christ, for the perfect froth), he stayed alive. And now, four prints to the Met and eight hundred dollars.

Schwartz winked at himself again. He had marvelous eyes, everyone said that too. Brown, almond-shaped, deep and sensitive; prominent in his swelled head, something else everyone agreed on. Schwartz' ego: very healthy.

He was driving through Ithaca on State Street, a half-hour south of the farm, which had been one of his springtime coups. A hundred dollars a month, forty acres; an 1830 cottage filled with antiques, surrounded by plum and pear trees, raspberry and red currant bushes, grape vines. A very old man died wintering in Tampa, and his son, a loud, active 68, had answered their "Call Collect" housing ad in the *Ithaca Journal*.

"Wonderful, sounds wonderful," Schwartz had shouted through 3000 miles of crackling phone line. "We'll take it."

So, when spring quarter ended, they'd sublet Margaret's house, packed Schwartz' car, and driven east, an adventure. Margaret loved adventures, having tried for six or eight years to avoid them. Schwartz loved her for it. Life with her was an adventure. Ever since the night, five months after they met, that a now ex-girlfriend of Margaret's had said straight out to both of them, "Oh yes, younger men. They smell good and they're easy to train."

The next morning, after an estranged, sexless night, Margaret had sniffed him. "Half-truths," she'd said, and smiled.

Margaret had only to be scholarly all summer, and spend the paychecks deposited twice a month in her California account. Or not so scholarly, laze in the pink-and-white hammock they'd hung behind the house under yellowskinned plum trees. Often, she lay barebreasted beneath the maturing fruit; hers, large and white, already ripe, floated above a lush-to-the-edge-of-plump belly that stayed white despite the sun. Blond skin, she'd explained, a liability of blond hair. (What had Schwartz done to deserve all this? Ivan Schwartz, youngest of three Schwartz boys?)

He accelerated, and thought about Margaret's summer; laze in the scholarly hammock; pick berries and make jam; make love when the afternoon had cooled so that their bodies wouldn't stick like hot thighs to slip covers. Sometimes they ignored the heat and separated sonorously—a moist swack from neck to knees.

Schwartz concentrated on not getting a speeding ticket. Twenty minutes later, he pulled off the graveled road into their driveway, hardpacked dirt split by a ribbon

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of grass. In his absence the buckwheat field across the road had blossomed, green ground cover now become a blanket of lightly scented white flowers. Schwartz climbed from the car. His heart swelled. Schwartz, whiz-bang from Brooklyn, sniffing a field of buckwheat. Their landlord, the son, who lived a quarter-mile down the road, had taught him to milk a cow. Schwartz sniffed, his teeth reflecting sunlight. So far they'd made five different kinds of jam, all from fruit they'd picked. He turned towards the rustling screendoor. Margaret stepped onto the porch, ten feet away.

"Hi."

She wore blue jean cutoffs, a lighter blue tanktop t-shirt. She smiled, barefoot, barearmed. Happy, though, she didn't look.

"Hi," Schwartz answered. He walked towards her, noticing the grass needed mowing, climbed the three cement steps to stand beside her. They kissed, then Schwartz stepped back.

"Hey," he said, and winked. "Did you miss me?"

"Too much." A smile tugged at her lips. "Baby, I missed you too much."

An hour later they sat at the kitchen table, which was covered with a firehouse red-and-white checked oilcloth. The ceiling and walls were dinge-white. A small wood stove, cold all summer, fronted the short wall near the door. Long service had erased whatever pattern the grass-stain-green linoleum may once have had. A strip of in-door-outdoor carpet, volcanic orange, edged the sink and stove on the wall opposite the door. Schwartz, considering the overall effect, doubted that Floyd, the dead old man, could see colors. Yet the other rooms, filled with old oak pieces, weren't garish. Maybe he bought the oak, then went color-blind. Schwartz doubted that too.

It was almost six, time for cocktails. Schwartz stirred first one then the other gin, tonic, ice and lime with his pinkie, licked the pinkie, pushed the fuller glass towards Margaret. Behind the plum trees, somewhere in the fenced field that began 50 feet beyond Floyd's hand-tied grape vines (half overgrown with his first summer's absence), a cow bellowed. Schwartz sipped his drink. The cow bellowed again.

"I've been waiting for that," said Margaret.

"For what?"

"She started bawling yesterday afternoon." Margaret looked at him with worried eyes, wrinkles they agreed added character, not years. "Since they took her calf away."

"Why?"

"Oh." She seemed puzzled, then smiled. "The county fair started this morning in Seneca Falls."

Schwartz realized there was a good deal going on he wasn't getting—as if he were watching a foreign movie with subtitles: a long speech, native speakers in the audience laughing, a two-word translation, *I'm hungry*. But he didn't ask. One thing about Margaret, she always knew what was bothering her and said it straight out. In that she was different than Schwartz, who tended to ignore problems, believing that with a little time, everything would take care of itself. Perhaps the difference was a function of their ages, but Schwartz didn't think so. He said, "What say we go to the fair tonight?"

Without answering, Margaret stood, walked to the sink, and washed her hands. Over the gurgle of running water, Schwartz listened to the cow complaining in the field. After a minute, Margaret returned to the table and sat down.

"They said she'll cry for the calf until her voice gives out. They said it might take days."

Schwartz covered her clasped hands with both of his, fingers piled high on the kitchen table. Margaret said, "I listened to her all night. You know what I was thinking? I'm thirty-four and I don't have any kids to cry for. I was thinking," she stopped and looked at him, roundeyed with tears, "it's time, you know. I was thinking it's time."

Then she began to cry, and Schwartz, who'd come to regard Margaret's tears as one of the ways she got on in the world, put his arms around her and held on.

"It's not your fault," Margaret said. "I didn't want children at your age either."

They were holding hands, walking in the pasture west of the one in which the cow still bawled, her voice steady and plaintive, but weakening, as if her throat was closing up. Schwartz considered the reasons Margaret hadn't had children yet: her career; the '60s and what they'd meant to her; six years with a man who feared responsibility even more than she did.

Schwartz considered his own careful plans, which, until he met Margaret and the seed had been planted in a dark corner of his psyche, hadn't included kids until he was in his thirties. All the justifications: career; the need not to have to make money; a desire to remain Pack-A-Suitcase Schwartz—call and I'll be there.

"Look," he said, and pointed. "There're still some cherries on the tree."

"Where? Oh—"

The south fence of the pasture—along which they strolled—was edged with old cherry trees. Early in the summer, Schwartz had acted out a childhood fantasy: climbed a tree and shook down bright red fruit. The pie, he remembered, was delicious. Schwartz put his arm around Margaret's shoulder.

"Let's go back," he said. "It's getting dark."

They pivoted, turned towards the house. On the far side of the cherry tree, birds circled in an apple orchard, fluttering from limb to limb, from tree to tree, singing magic birdsong. Schwartz liked to walk at this time of day—when the sky at the west end of the pasture (after six weeks in the country, Schwartz had learned to tell one direction from another) was streaking red and orange, coloring the pale clouds; and the birds in the orchard sang hosannas to the dusk. For the first time in his life, he felt part of a picture he didn't have to arrange.

Just then, the cow bellowed louder than usual, a real piercer. She was in the next pasture, too far to be seen, but God, what a voice. Schwartz and Margaret looked at each other, said nothing, kept walking. After a minute, Schwartz said, "I love you very much, you know."

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She looked up, they walked more slowly.

"I also know," she answered, "you're not ready for kids. I'm not either. Unfortunately, my body says it's time, and it has the last word."

Schwartz peered into her ordinary eyes.

"You're trying to tell me you're pregnant?"

She laughed, and for a long time—an hour, a second, a year—Schwartz thought, *Pregnant, that's it;* the cow bellowing, the sky blushing pink above the trees. Margaret kissed his left cheek just below the ear and said, "It would be nice if it were that simple, wouldn't it?"

They walked towards the house. At the iron gate that separated pasture from hay barn, Margaret pulled away, pushed the gate open. Schwartz followed her through, closed the gate, and looped a length of metal chain over the gate and the adjacent fencepost. It was nearly dark. In the next field, behind their plum trees, the cow bellowed and bellowed. Schwartz, who pitied it, also wished it were dead. He crossed to Margaret, put his arm around her. But instead of continuing on to the house, which was dimly in view past the pond that had once been used for cattle, but which was now too shallow and green-slimed for anything except frogs, they turned to the west, and watched last light extinguish itself behind the trees. The singing of frogs and insects harmonized with the cow better than the birds had, thought Schwartz. Better than we do.

"Margaret."

"Hey, Schwartz."

It was too dark to see, but he could imagine her expression from the pressure on his hand.

"I'm fighting for my life, you know?"

Schwartz didn't answer. She eased up on his hand and said, "I won't force you into anything, don't worry. We can split up."

"I'm not worried." Schwartz, of course, was very worried. Of kids or losing Margaret, he wasn't sure. "What makes you think I am?"

"Your hands are cold."

"So are yours."

"*I'm* worried."

Schwartz kissed her, she kissed him. Despite the bellowing cow, it was a wonderful kiss. Then Margaret stepped back, and they walked towards the house.

"Look," he said. "We love each other, everything else will take care of itself."

"Sometimes," she replied, "you're such a baby, I can't believe I'm with you. No matter how sexy you are."

Right then, he should have said—he wanted to say—'I'll arrange everything. We'll have kids, don't worry', but something prevented him. Fear. They walked past the pond, and the army of frogs stopped singing, disappeared with faint plops into the green water it was now too dark to see.

"Everything will be all right," he said. "You'll have children, I promise."

Margaret's fingers tightened against his. He thought he should say more, but didn't. The cow bellowed and they continued on across the unmown grass. Schwartz and Margaret, terrified, in love. □

RICHARD ROBBINS

RETURNING TO THE MIDDLE

It was long after you died.

I brought you back here, stooped down
and left your ashes in the lake.
They spread out like a cloud
the day after rain, wading out toward the middle

with each new boat wake
or whisper of storm crashing on the shore.
You would have loved that March,
that one bright afternoon. We were alone,

there were cutthroat snatching flies,
and all I could think of
turned blue in my memory, even the voice
you saved to break the most fragile

of silences. Blue lake, blue sky—
fish blurring blue and you talking
one day trolling for salmon,
talking as our boat

strayed toward the middle
about leaving each other by illness
or circumstance: being sad about that,
not wanting to be wrongly sad.

We never came near to catching our limit.
If it was a day like many others,
we passed the cliff paintings
on the way back to camp. Easing the boat

close to the granite wall,
we counted ocher bison for the hundredth time,
the thirty or so red strokes
without clear reference. The one eye this
painted man

faces east forever
is returning forever to the lake.
His gaze left what you left, turns out
toward a small branch and drift of weed:

the feeding and draining river made visible.

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HARVEST

ANNETTE SANFORD

Jess Earl Mason ran his daddy's black truck head-on into an oak tree at seven o'clock on a winter evening, but it was nearly eight before the sheriff came up through the dark of the back steps to tell Mayda and Jeeter their son was dead. Their only son, their only child.

Mayda listened blank-faced to the khaki-suited man making his unbelievable announcement. Elder Longness he was called, though his name was Tom. He was the law now, but through the first six grades of the Rhoan's Hollow School where they had gone forty years before, he and Mayda had sat across the aisle from each other. Elder one grade ahead of her, liking her sausage and butter sandwiches better than his own because of the garlic, and trading whenever notes scribbled on tablet paper could persuade her to spare him one.

"How can Jess Earl be dead?" Mayda said. "How can he be dead?"

Before Elder's knock, she and Jeeter had been sitting under the bare bulb that dangled in the center of the kitchen, Jeeter wet-lipped over the fishing equipment in the Sears catalog, and Mayda across the table clipping a recipe for scalloped squash out of the *Farm Journal.*

They sat down again, Mayda like a tire going flat, and Jeeter blubbering, all in a heap.

"He came up from the river around that curve where Joiner's pasture used to be," Longness said. "He slammed into the tree." Mayda heard the grit that had stuck to the soles of Elder's boots grate on the pitted linoleum. "I can promise you, he never felt a thing."

She fixed her look on the third chair standing empty under the light. "Don't tell me he was drunk. He sat right there. We had our supper."

"It was an accident," the sheriff said.

A drip at the sink tapped a pie plate left there to soak. The hackberry rattled its branches at the window.

"Where is he?" Mayda said.

"We took him straight on to the funeral parlor in Gridley." Longness watched her push her chair back. "You can't go there yet, Mayda."

"I'll see if he's dead or if he isn't."

"They won't have him ready till morning."

"Jeeter, get up. We've got to look about our boy."

"Not till morning," Longness said.

Mayda began to cry.

Jeeter slid out of his chair, a frail, pale man in loose-fitting overalls and cream-colored underwear that bagged at the elbows. The glare of the ceiling light beat with a silver sheen on the skin of his head. Longness made a place for him at Mayda's side, but he passed on by and went off into the bedroom. Mayda brought out a handkerchief from somewhere and blew her nose.

"First the dam," she said, "and now this."

Longness, who had skirted Jess Earl's chair and taken Jeeter's, stared down at the catalog. Nothing that counted with Mayda had ever come out of Sears and Roebuck. "It never rains but it pours," he said.

Mayda's gaze probed a pocket of darkness beside the refrigerator. "Him and Jeeter, they were going to have themselves a bait house. You'd heard. I guess. Going to get rich selling minnows and red worms."

Jeeter reappeared in the doorway. "I reckon—" He

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looked hard at the table were Elder sat. "I reckon a tire blowed out."

Longness got to his feet. "It could have been the steering rod or most anything."

"I can't stand it," Mayda said, "if I have to wonder until I'm dead, too, what happened."

"We'll figure it out." Elder's voice settled like an arm around her shoulders. "There's all kinds of ways once a feller gets to looking."

Mayda pinched onto his sleeve. "He was named after my pa, you know."

"I remember."

"When he was first coming into his teens, Jess Earl looked just like Pa. Like a picture we've still got of him taken down at Flournoy's old studio next to the blacksmith shop when there was that grove of sycamores still standing there."

Jess Randall—Mayda's father—had grown up hard, his land meant more than family to him.

"A man's acreage," he was renowned for saying, "deserves the best. Dress it down like an eighty dollar mare," he told his sons, "and see how it struts for you."

They didn't hang around to see.

"We aren't farmers," they told Jess.

"To hell with you then," he told them, and Mayda, who loved the land the same as he did, got the farm. Everybody in Rhoan's Hollow figured she deserved it, putting up with the old man, most especially after her mother died. They looked for Mayda to get from that plot of good, loose bottom loam the two bales an acre Jess was priming it for when he choked to death on a chicken bone, but it never happened. Mostly on account of Jeeter.

Jeeter's folks were fish-camp people. They came out of Louisiana one spring in a broken-down truck and spilled six children out on the river bank. They set up a tent for themselves and a lean-to for their hound dogs. They never paid a nickel in taxes. Pretty soon the young ones were marrying into the county's old families. The one that married the Posthoff girl got himself elected road commissioner and built her a nice frame house and kept it painted too. The oldest girl had a voice like a songbird and went all over the country singing in a traveling choir.

Jeeter mostly watched the river. In a brown notebook he kept in his overalls' pocket, he recorded its highs and lows. He knew how many catfish were pulled out of it from Saturday to Saturday and who had hooked them. He knew when the stream changed course the least little bit and where the dangerous sinkholes were.

He was a river man. At twenty-four, Mayda failed to observe that. What she had in mind for herself was a man to farm her land, and children, and two bales to an acre. What she got was Jeeter, and Jess Earl who wasn't quite bright, and more Johnson grass than she ever had cotton bales.

Then one January morning the government men pulled into her lane and named a price for her acreage. Generous, but Mayda turned it down.

"The county doesn't need a dam," she said to whoever would listen. "Nobody wants a lake where cotton was meant to grow.

"You'll see," she told everybody. "The government has bit off way more than it can chew."

For awhile it seemed she might be right. Flags, stuck in the ground by the U.S. Corps of Engineers, fluttered for two years before they faded and fell over.

But the men in business suits came back. The government lawyers met with the town lawyers. Farmers capitulated right and left. Mayda's land was condemned when she wouldn't sign the papers, and the money went into escrow at the First State Bank of Gridley.

All summer and into the fall she rocked on the porch and listened to the saws bringing down the timber that rimmed her fields. Smoke spiralled up from the fires that burned it. Men on bulldozers pushed the loam of her cotton acreage into retaining walls that eventually would hold back the water.

The level of the lake, the newspaper announced, would reach 18.9 feet on Rhoan's Hollow Road. Up to where Mayda's chicken house stood.

Cut off from the river, Jeeter chewed and spat and pored over the newspaper while the water inched up over the bottomland. The chamber of commerce forecast five thousand visitors the first summer alone. They were coming with campers and outboard motors, with water skis and a terrible thirst. Jeeter realized where they were headed, and he and Jess Earl got busy hammering and tossing hen boxes out onto the dirt and scaring the wits out of the White Leghorns.

"You're turning the chicken coop into a what?" Mayda said.

Jeeter explained.

She saw that he had already set himself up behind a cash register with a cigar in his mouth and a blue and white yachting cap pushed back on his head. Jeeter would catch the minnows. Jess Earl was primed to tend the worms. Their establishment, Jeeter told Mayda, would offer ice cold beer and souvenir sweat shirts and picture post cards of the lake where the land once was.

The sheriff hung around on one foot and the other until Mayda's crying slacked off. Then he said as gently as he could, "I'll take the clothes on into town."

Mayda looked up at him. "One oak left in the whole of Rhoan's Hollow. Left standing by the government so Jess Earl could hit it."

"Jess Earl's church suit," Elder said. "Don't bother with shoes." He said, "In the morning I'll come back for you and Jeeter."

"We can make it our ownselves," Mayda said, and then she remembered they'd lost the truck too.

When Elder was gone, Mayda picked up the recipe for scalloped squash from off the table and folded it until it was no bigger than a square dime.

"I knew there was a day marked down for this, but I never looked to see it. Us still here," she said to Jeeter, "and Jess Earl asleep in the bosom of the Lord."

"He ought never to have got started with that truck."

"You let him."

"You never said not to."

"He thought he could fly in that old black truck."

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Mayda sat down. "He thought he was riding a big, black bird flapping its wings over the countryside." Her breath hissed through her nose. "Well, I say in the long run he's better off."

"God almighty, Mayda!"

"He never could have looked out for himself, Jeeter."

"He would have caught on to the bait business."

"You think you could have taught him to ring up that machine? When he never learned to write his name so anybody but us could read it?"

"There's a world of folks doing fine that don't pay no mind to books."

"That wasn't all Jess Earl couldn't handle."

"Farming. Say it."

"It's the best living there is."

"Not for me."

"How do you know? You never tried."

"I ain't your Pa."

"It was us had the land. We could have made anything out of it, anything we wanted."

"Anything you wanted," he said. "What me and Jess wanted, we was fixing to get."

"Money. Money gets used up and then you don't have it."

"Have you got the land?"

Mayda got out of her chair. "We need to be praying for Jess Earl's soul. Get down, Jeeter. Pray."

He stayed where he was. She knelt beside him, her cheek touching the stripes of his overalls.

"Your way," he said. "Always the right way."

She said with her eyes closed, "I'm praying, Jeeter."

She heard him crying, but his voice stayed strong. "You pride yourself because you always done what they all expected. Your Ma, your Pa, your Sunday School teacher." He stepped away from her with his hands clenched at his sides. "In my whole life I never pleased nobody with nothing I did."

Mayda got up, pulling the hem of her skirt free from her garter roll. "Are you bragging?"

His face shone wet and spotted. "Me and Jess Earl could have made it in the bait business, but now we ain't going to and that's all there is to that."

A sour-sweet sickness came up in her throat. "You're feeling sorry for yourself."

"I'm feeling sorry for my boy! He finally came up on a chance to prove himself. It took the whole United States government to give it to him, but by golly, he would have showed you—and everybody else in Gridley too. Except for that stinking damn tree."

"I never asked more of Jess Earl than he could do," Mayda said. "He'd have given away your worms by the fistful, don't you know that? And he drank, Jeeter. He would have finished off your iced-down beer all by himself every day of the week."

"He would have owned a business! Folks would have said, 'That's Jess Earl Mason.' "

Jeeter walked off. Mayda heard him in the other room, and in her mind's eye she saw him narrow-shouldered with his bones poking out of his underwear.

"You think I don't hurt because my son's dead?" she shouted after him.

Jeeter came halfway into the light. "Not a season ever passed that we didn't have a crop."

"A pitiful few straggles is not a crop!" She turned her face to the black windowpanes. "Just one good harvest. I don't see that was asking too much. I don't see that it was wrong to want that little bit out of all God's got."

The people started coming then. Word had got over to Waverly and Mayda's oldest brother came. There was the preacher and four or five ladies, one that had already baked a cake and brought it hot with the icing running off. They kept coming for hours, filling up the kitchen and spilling over through the bedrooms and into the parlor. Mayda remembered that she hadn't put up her sewing and some of the ladies did it for her.

The clock struck one before they took themselves off, trickling out into the yard, pulling the warm kitchen air with them through the wide open door. When Mayda finally got her nightgown on, Jeeter was asleep, and her side of the bed was cold as any coffin.

She slept, too, in a fitful sort of way. Then she woke up. The coyotes were tuning up in the hollow. She remembered when she was a girl and they did that and then in the morning there would be white chicken feathers like snow all over the ground.

He was wrong. Jeeter. She'd never had her way about anything. She got the land, but what did that come to? She had Jess Earl, and he was flawed.

She dreamed a little dream. She had curls around her face and a long apron on. Under it was a baby, already born, hanging on like a possum.

She woke up with a start, imagining voices scolding her. Plenty of people thought she was stupid, or proud or mean to go on keeping after him, playing like she could see in him his grandfather's chin, thinking clear up to the end that something fine might still spring out of him.

Well, Jess Earl was finished now. He was finished from the day he came into the world, but thank God she hadn't known it. It was good she hadn't known about the dam, too, and about the land going, and good that she'd never wondered until tonight why she hadn't married Elder Longness.

Jeeter made a bubbling sound; she reached out and touched the bony ridge of his hip and felt the warmth rising through the weave of his underwear.

What it all wound down to was the half acre the house stood on and the money waiting in the bank. What could she do now but claim it? Or else let the county bury her son. Whatever was left over, Jeeter could have. He could light cigars with it and buy himself a boat and carpet his bait house.

Through the window she saw one star. Venus, was it? It always struck her as funny that stars had names. That spots of light way off in the sky were Mars or Jupiter or Saturn. As if you could buy a ticket and go there. As if, like people, you could come to know them.

She closed her eyes. She was heading off into a long, slack time, she knew. A time full of fits and starts and back-ups and go-nowheres. But later on—

She turned on her side. Later on she might try her hand at red worms. □

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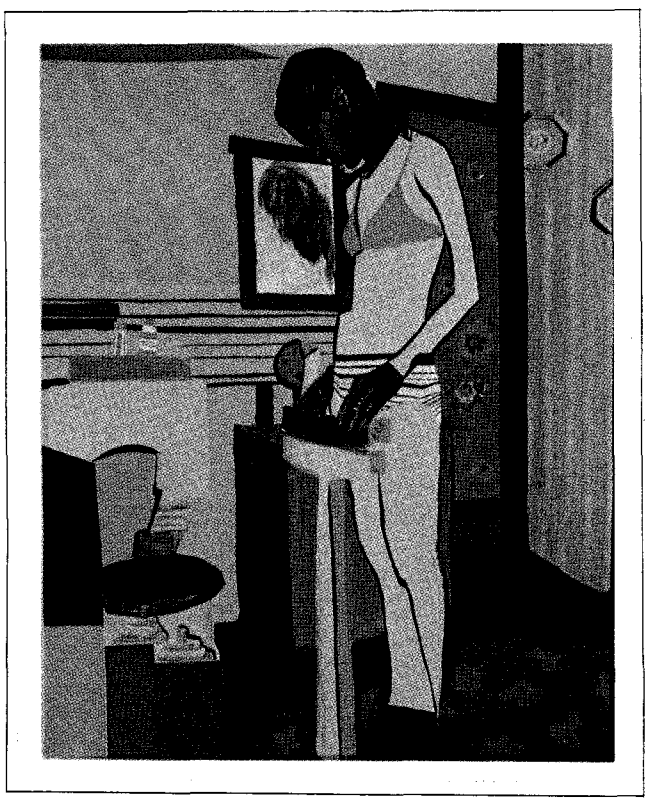
WILL YOU MARRY ME?

CHESTER AARON



Julia arrived on the six o'clock flight from Rome but because of the evening commute and the confusion at Customs (a flight had arrived at the same time from Hong Kong) and the confusion at the terminal (construction on the lower level approaches diverted automobiles from the usual pick-up stations) they did not make contact until seven-thirty. He was convinced she'd given up and had taken a taxi to San Francisco, but one final visit to the TWA desk paid off. A message, "J.A. waiting in the restaurant," was clocked at seven-fifteen.

From the alcove entry of the restaurant, he saw a waving hand. The large dark eyes and the sunburst smile could belong to no other woman. She half rose from the booth as he approached. Reluctant to attract attention from other travelers, she permitted a brief embrace, a chaste kiss on the cheek. As he managed a nip of the tissue near her cheekbone he also permitted himself an irritation that was almost anger. The mix of irritation and anger was by now common accompaniment to her returns from Italy. As always, it passed quickly, subdued by the familiar scent of her perfume. She was back once more. How could he possibly remain irritated or angry for more than a moment?

By the time they fled the airport she was touching him. He could not stop his fingers from straying to her hand, her throat, her cheek, wherever bare skin was available.

"Are you hungry?" he asked, as they rode north toward the city.

"Oh, no. They served dinner two hours ago. I bet you'd like to stop, though. You must be starved, poor man."

"I thought they might serve you a meal, so I had a hamburger about five o'clock."

"You pig. What if I'd not eaten? You'd have sat there and drunk your coffee and watched me gorge. I actually lost eight pounds in Italy."

"Don't lose any more. You'll look like one of those sticks in *Vogue*."

"Oh, darling, I'm a fat toad."

"All that pasta. Did you get to see everyone?"

She was thawing but some of the reserve remained. She brought her face down once, locking his hand between her cheek and shoulder. The umber lids came down like heavy shades and there was a barely audible pigeon coo. After a brush of lips, she released his hand.

"Did you?" he asked again.

"Did I what, my darling?"

"Did you see all your relatives?"

"Almost all, yes. I went to Como a few days—it's polluted, horrible—and I went to Florence for a weekend and Rome for four days. The rest of the time I visited aunts and uncles and cousins in Tuscany."

"I love you, Julie."

Of course it was abrupt. He knew she was not ready. But he could keep it in no longer. "I missed you. I miss you more every time." Her smile and the lazy drop of those dark eyelids sent chills around his waist and down into his groin. "Look at me," he pleaded.

She leaned back against the locked door, squirming into the embrace of the bucket seat, and she looked at him. His heart skipped a beat. The eyes, larger and darker than ever, were tired. Now, after not having those eyes before him for five weeks, he almost begged her to never leave again. *Marry me, please marry me*: the words almost slipped out. She certainly wasn't ready for that. He would have to wait several days before he could speak those words again without her wincing, without her whis-

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pering that *oh, if she could, if she only could, she would that very night.*

As after previous returns from Italy, they went directly to the El Drisco, a hotel in the city's residential area. There, as they unwound, talked, exchanged gossip and truths, they managed, as always, to avoid one topic: her husband. Tomorrow, mid-morning, her husband would pick her up at the airline office downtown. Exhausted, as if she had just arrived, she would nap in the car on the way home. Patient, indulgent, her husband would wait until dinner and then the whole family would listen to her stories. Occasionally her husband would correct her pronunciation of a word or phrase. He was not Italian but he taught French at the University, and so reserved proprietary rights over all foreign languages.

It was almost nine o'clock when they entered their room at the El Drisco. Julia removed her shoes, went into the bathroom, came out, her blouse partially undone, her toenails a finely brushed rose. The water was falling into the tub and a fine cloud of steam was just beginning to roll into the hallway.

They reached for each other carefully, both determined to ease gently into their passions, as she would soon be easing her body down into the tub. While he undressed she hurried back to the bathroom to turn off the water.

The water was cool when she returned to it so she had to drain the tub and fill it again.

He sat on the edge of the tub, nude, silent, dangling his hand in the water. She let her body settle lower. The froth moved up over her breasts, her throat, her chin, her cheeks. He almost called out, "Stop. No lower." Her black curls floated on the surface of the water.

When, after a taunting moment, she slid up above the froth and let her eyelids part, he traced the rims of both eyes with the tip of one index finger. She caught the fingertip between her teeth. Biting tenderly, she pulled. She took his right wrist in two suds-covered hands, tugged with steady effort. He slid into the water like a trained porpoise.

On the bed again, refreshed, intensely awake, they stuffed extra pillows behind their shoulders so they might sit up.

"Tell me," he said. "Tell me all about it. The museums, the restaurants, the cathedrals, the affairs."

"I told you, I spent almost all my time with relatives in Tuscany. You, tell me about you. What did you . . .?"

"Oh no you don't. You're the one who went on vacation. Start with affairs."

"Twelve. Three a week. OK?"

"You were gone five weeks. That makes fifteen."

"But a week was spent traveling."

"There are always pilots, a salesman in the next seat, under the blankets at night, or a lay-over, if you'll excuse the expression, in Chicago or New York. You did see Niccolo."

"Twice. Once for an hour, a quick lunch. And once for a ride on the canals in Venice. About fifty-two minutes."

"Time enough."

"Perhaps for you, my darling. Not for me."

He knew she was lying. He always knew. She just could not control those almost mannered betrayals. The pretense in the imposed aggrievement, a not quite invisible layer of exaggerated cynicism, an ennui added to the pitch (an octave lower) of her voice. Neither could gracefully lie to the other any more. One of the penalties of love.

"Did he take you on his motorcycle?"

He'd meant it as a pun but he no sooner said it than he imagined it: Niccolo sitting, facing the handlebars (they would be parked in a forest at the edge of a lake) and she, astride him, facing him, leaning back. He heard the groans, gems stolen from his personal private treasure.

"Darling, why do you torment yourself? And insist I be an accomplice? You'll just get angry. Please don't be silly."

"I'm not silly. You know that. And I'm not angry. You know that, too."

"Do you really want me to make up a story to prove you're correct? Give another turn of the screw?"

"I do the punning around here."

"OK. Once. No, twice. Not on his motorcycle, though. I'm not that supple any more."

"Are you kidding? You're talking to a man who's seen you contort your body into three separate figure eights. Did you come?"

"No. Yes."

Which arrived first—anger, relief, resentment—he wasn't sure. But they were all there, chasing each other, like Disney elves, through the chambers of his heart.

"That was it," she went on. Niccolo, twice. "And it was not pleasant. He seems to be growing younger as I grow older. I can no longer let him see me naked. He'd never seen my stretch marks before. 'They look like knife scars,' he said. I detested him."

He waited, judging her voice, balancing truth against lie.

"I was scared. You know, that bombing in Milan occurred the day I was there. Two days later I saw Niccolo. There were bullet holes in the fender of his car. And once, when he took off his jacket, I saw a gun."

He sat up, clear of the almost vertical wall of pillows behind him. He felt dizzy. Sitting up too fast, probably. He swung his legs to get out of bed but waited for the floor and walls to stabilize.

She'd met Niccolo before she'd met him, had slept with Niccolo before she'd slept with him. Before he and Julia had grown so possessive of each other, so dependent on each other, they had exchanged confessions, had informed each other of important affairs, recent and distant. Niccolo, a young architect, had been her only Italian lover. But, she'd confessed after the last trip, it was over. He was so young. He was six thousand miles away. The next time (she'd said, the last time) she went to Italy he'd probably be married and have two or three children.

"Your Niccolo's a Fascist," he said. He started toward the bathroom, stopped, faced the window that offered the views of San Francisco and the Bay Bridges. "Your Niccolo's a Fascist. A killer of children. And you slept . . . no, you *made love* to him."

"Oh, darling, he's a kind, gentle man. And because he's a Fascist, if he is, doesn't . . ."

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"Please don't finish that sentence. Don't say what I think you're going to say."

Her sigh spoke of her exasperation. "And how do you know he's a Fascist?"

"Not just a Fascist. A terrorist, a . . ."

"I know. A child killer. What nonsense. You've never met the man and you've condemned him. Come to bed."

"Remember the photograph on your dresser that time? We hadn't really fallen in love yet. You were sorting letters, papers, photos, keeping some, throwing some out. Remember? Your husband and children . . ."

"Don't."

". . . had gone to Tahoe for the weekend and you and I . . ."

"Please don't."

"I asked who the man was. A cousin, you said. I knew you were lying but I never mentioned it again. Now, suddenly, it all makes sense."

She turned her head away and groaned, as if in reaction to a sudden fleeting pain. He wasn't sure if it had been his recollection of Niccolo or of her husband.

"I remember something. There were objects on Niccolo's desk. Paintings on his wall. There was a bust. A year ago, I saw it for a second, maybe two seconds, and now I know what it was. It was a bust of Mussolini."

He lowered his body onto the window seat and considered the city below, the strings of lights connecting lanes and streets to the dark water.

"You slept with German women," she said. "You're too damn horny to go without sex and you were in Germany for five months. I bet . . ."

"Listen to this. I've never told this to anyone. This is a story, you like me to tell you stories. After the war ended six of us were sent to guard a medical warehouse. I was in charge. Two young German women were sleeping and eating there. They'd worked in the warehouse. The A.M.G.—American Military Government—kept them on to help with the inventory and the records. I took the prettier of the two women. She spoke English. I had coffee, chocolate, toothpaste, food. Worth their weight in gold. The first night, when we went to bed, she asked me if I was Italian. I said yes. We screwed a lot over the next week. Not *made love*, we screwed. I came in from guard duty one day. I was wearing a Luger I'd bought. She asked to see it. I took out the clip, handed her the gun. Bang bang bang, she had it disassembled and laid out on the table. 'You keep your weapon very clean,' she said. Bang bang bang, she had it reassembled. She'd been a Hitler Youth. I knew it. An important flashback here: ten days before she and I met, my unit had liberated Dachau. That night, the night I realized the truth about her, we screwed. Just as she was ready to come I pulled out. 'I'm a Jew,' I said. I told the corporal—Corporal Landseer, a drunken bum—he could have her."

He said no more for several minutes. Nor did she. He wondered if she might be sleeping. Had she heard his story?

"I liked Niccolo."

"You loved Niccolo. You looked forward to being with him. You wrote him letters. You planned your trips to Italy around your meetings. You're an American, he connected you to *la patria*. He was young, you loved being screwed by a young Italian. But his Italian cock is Fascist, he filled you with Fascist child-killing shit and you didn't care. You didn't know but you wouldn't have cared even if you'd known. Romance, that's what you want. And politics can't be romantic. All of a sudden I have sympathy for your husband."

He went into the bathroom and stared into the mirror. Twice he tried to shave but he gave up each time before using the razor. Watching the water swirl down the sink's drain, he thought he was going to be sick. He lowered the toilet seat and the cover and sat there for a while, then he stood under a shower as hot as he could endure. He soaped and rinsed himself three times.

She was sitting up, the pillows behind her, when he came out. Her face was so pale, her eyes so round, so dark, he wondered if she might be ill.

"Please come to bed. I don't feel well. I'm scared."

He slid beneath the blankets and she pulled his body to her own, fixing his arms about her.

"I haven't read those books," she said. "I wasn't in the army. I wasn't in the war. I never thought of Niccolo as a Fascist or anti-Fascist."

He jerked her arms away and sat up, on the edge of the bed. He would have shouted, or screamed, had he spoken.

"How can you be so cruel to me and consider yourself so superior to Niccolo?"

"What the hell does that mean?"

"I never loved Niccolo. Yes, I was infatuated. Then I liked him, liked being with him. He was a friend. But I'll never be able to be with him again, I'll never be able to touch him, never even be able to talk to him. Is that what being politicized means? If so, OK, you've politicized me. It's over. Are you pleased?"

He returned to bed but they lay apart from each other. After he turned off the lamp they shared the darkness in silence. He felt the bed quivering. She was sobbing. I wish I could cry, she had often said. I just can't ever seem to be able to cry. I wish I could marry you, she had also said. Not often, two or three times, perhaps. She'd said it last on the night before her departure on this trip. It had been in this room. Whenever they stayed together in San Francisco it was always at the El Drisco, always in this room.

He had asked her to marry him the first year they'd met. He'd asked her several times. How could she? she'd said. Her husband didn't know about them. It would kill him to know. And he loved the children. No, she'd probably never be able to leave him. She refused to hurt him. He was a kind man.

Five weeks ago, the night before her departure, in this room, she had asked if he still wanted to marry her. He'd not spoken the words for some time, she'd said. He knew the words always brought pain as well as pleasure to her but he had spoken them: "Will you marry me?" She had cringed, gasped, and then clutched him frantically.

Now, each word tearing at his heart, and knowing she would not ever say yes, he reached for her and said, "Will you marry me, Julia?" □

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MARIÈVE RUGO

FLESH AND BONES

For Carole Oles

The flesh speaks
to the bones,
"I am what
is real."
The bones wait,
say nothing.

As when under the right light, or time, or cloud,
hills divulge their shadows. Bones of old rivers
running underground perhaps, or secret mines of silver.
Earth, the flesh, the sweet curves of grass,
the funnelled valleys where water runs all night.
Underneath, the hills hold together bone to bone.

The flesh speaks
to the bones,
"I live in
touching. Touch."
The bones wait,
say nothing.

When any woman curves her flesh to any man,
her skeleton curves too, but not completely.
He could snap her bone by bone, does not,
preferring the small snap of the heart.
There, blood begins its journeyings through
her passionate confusion of flesh and flesh.

The flesh speaks
to the bones,
"I am what
is needed."
The bones wait,
say nothing.

Removed from the verandahs, the scented teapot,
smiles and gestures, bones keep their counsel.
Rituals frame agenda for the flesh. Inside each bone,
a curving tunnel as precise and clear as silver.
There, martyrs make their way. There, the exiled
find at last a country and a home.

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FATHER'S DAY

KARLTON KELM

The road to the cemetery was just plain sand then, with deep zigzag ruts which kept Uncle Theos's elbows pumping up and down like pistons as he tried to follow them faster than he could manipulate the steering wheel. Those of us in back were swayed from side to side like revival singers, or suddenly shot upward to hit the canvas top, then land on the rigid black-leather seat with a thud that threatened to snap the springs. "Hang on!" Uncle Theos called from the front seat—more subdued than usual because of the occasion—and Aunt Calixta, on one side of me, cautioned just loud enough to be heard above the engine: "Careful, Theos, the axle!" But it was the one time my mother, on the other side of me, wasn't afraid of Uncle Theos's driving. Other times she'd call up front, "For pity sakes, slow down. We're hitting bottom!"—he was her "baby" brother whom she still felt she could boss—but this day she was weeping too much to pay attention: we were burying my father.

There was the yellow sand and the way the road wound through the green hills, avoiding near the lake the marshes which were flooded half the year with green scummy water. There was the back of Uncle Theos's neck, raw as beefsteak from the hot summer wind, and the chug-chug of the old Mitchell, its radiator beginning to boil over when we reached the top of the steepest hill.

My cousin Ernie sat in front with Uncle Theos. He'd gone into long pants ahead of me, although I was a year older, and now he was teasing his father to let him drive on the way back from the cemetery. Uncle Theos kept saying he wasn't of age yet, every policeman in our small Wisconsin town knew he wasn't sixteen, but I knew that Ernie was as good as at the wheel already. It made me

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mad. It made me ashamed, thinking of Ernie driving a car, Ernie in long pants, when I was supposed to be thinking of my father in his coffin. But I couldn't help it. That's the way it had always been: Ernie and Aunt Calixta getting everything, and Ma and I doing without.

"If he'd only lived long enough to drive his own car." Ma kept crying, but I couldn't squeeze a tear out of me. He could have had one as well as Uncle Theos, I kept thinking, weren't they partners in the same business? But no, while Uncle Theos and Aunt Calixta and Ernie *rode* every Sunday, we *walked*. Sometimes they'd take us with them, but they had lots of friends, and while most of them owned cars, still it was like Aunt Calixta said: "It's nice to take someone who can turn around and take you."

Those Sunday afternoon walks we used to take. I would be ahead, pouting my face off, and the dog ahead of me, moving too fast for the rest of us but killing enough time nosing trees to let us catch up, then off again at a brisk trot, his legs going kind of sidewise, yet moving straight ahead in a way I never could figure out. My mother would be wearing something made over—her midnight-blue tricolette, or a beaded waist that hung over a taffeta skirt salvaged from a dress beginning to wear out. But she walked proud, bowing or waving to friends who whizzed by in their cars, smiling extra friendly so's they wouldn't think she cared we weren't riding, maybe even think we preferred to walk. My father would look at the ground though, his hands behind his back, his shoulders kind of stooped, and I'd hope he was feeling like two cents.

"There go the Mulgoons," my mother would cry, her voice of necessity bright to match her smile as she waved to five Mulgoons and they waved back. "I'll bet Fulton Mulgoon doesn't make one cent more than you, Frank. I'll bet not as much if the truth is known."

Or: "There's the Zamzo sisters. Don't tell me even those old maids have a car." Or: "Wasn't that young Everett Pinker and his girlfriend? My land, if even *he* can afford one— "

Most times my father wouldn't answer, wouldn't look at the cars, and I'd think it just went to show how guilty he was. But sometimes when you'd least expect it he'd up and say:

"I wish Fulton would pay me for his wife's last three pairs of shoes." Or: "Riding around in that flivver is all Lettie and Laura Zamzo *have* got." Or: "I'd a heap rather see Everett gettin' married and buyin' a bungalow—or takin' out a little life insurance."

Life insurance! That really got Ma going. "If you didn't put every cent you earn in life insurance we could have all kinds of things, not just a car. And *now* when we're living, not when we're *dead*."

We'd walk along the old brick sidewalks on East Main under the full green elms of summer, the bare black oaks of winter, their dull gnarled arms thrust against a salmon sunset. By the time we'd gone through "downtown," the business district, to West Main with its new cement walks and cultivated shrubbery, Ma would have worked up to:

"I wonder what people think, that's all, Frank. I told you what that new-in-town little Mrs. Fontaine asked: 'How long is your husband working for your brother, dear?' 'Working for Theos?' I laughed, 'Why, Frank's the senior partner.' But what was she to think? What's anybody to think?"

The more Ma said, the less Pa answered, but he wouldn't always be looking at the ground. Sometimes he'd look straight ahead, his jaw kind of set, seeing something further away than Ma or I could see. Or sometimes on those walks he would suddenly stop, stand perfectly still, one hand raised to his chest. "What's the matter?" Ma would ask, but he'd just mumble something about a little indigestion and move on. Other times he'd just stand there, pretending to examine a flower, or a certain kind of vine, only we didn't know he was pretending. Then one Sunday he shortened our walk, the next he shortened it more, and soon we didn't get over to East Main at all, only on West, or just downtown and back.

"Land sakes, soon we won't even be walking." Ma said. "The trouble with you, Frank, is you're all worn out from slaving in that store all day while Theos is out golfing."

We didn't know about my father's heart trouble until he was dead. He'd known, but hadn't wanted to worry us. The morning he died They piloted me into his small white room at the hospital and placed me by his small white bed where he half-lay, half-sat in a way that didn't look very comfortable. They kept pushing me closer because he couldn't talk loud, and I kept backing away because I didn't like the hard way he stared, the hard way he breathed, and all those black whiskers on the too-white face he had always kept so clean-shaven. Above all, I didn't like the faintly sweet-sour and bitter odor which may have been only a mingling of antiseptic and carnations and hospital food, but which to me became at once the smell of dying. This was the worst that could happen to you, and I didn't want to see it, I didn't want to smell it, but They took my hand and gave it to my father. He could hardly hold it, but he didn't stare so hard then, he even tried to smile, and between those hard, gaspy breaths he whispered:

"You and your ma—nothing to worry about—get a nice car—drive somewhere every Sunday—"

After that They let me go and brought in my mother, the last to see him. I don't know what he said to her, They said he just kissed her, but I didn't tell her or anybody what he had whispered to me. I don't know why—that would have been the quickest way to get her to buy a car. I guess I wanted her to forget my father. I guess I wanted to forget him myself, and a car would somehow remind us both. I'd made up my mind one way about him, and I didn't see why a few of his last words should change everything, should make Ma and me feel guilty when he'd always been the guilty one. I tried telling myself that what he'd said was only an admission of his guilt, an admission that he'd always been wrong.

My father died in summer, and that fall and winter we were still without a car, but when spring came and to me Pa already seemed many years dead, I secretly arranged for a shiny new sedan with disc wheels and those new

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balloon tires to drive up to our door. "No, no, no!" Ma cried. "If walking was good enough for your father, it's good enough for us." But I told her we couldn't send The Man away without at least letting him give us a "demonstration."

It was such a beautiful spring that we went for a whole month of demonstrations, a different car every few days, until my mother said sheepishly, "I guess if we don't get one now They'll have us down for cheapskates, accepting all those rides."

We'd take our friends and relatives with us one Sunday and they'd take us the next. Ma had the time of her life, because Uncle Theos was as scared of her driving as she'd always been of his. "Pretty soon the boys will be old enough to drive," said Aunt Calixta, "and then you two can sit back and take it easy." But sometimes the tears would come to Ma's eyes, and I'd know she was thinking of my father. Then I'd try to think: Maybe he just didn't like cars, maybe he was afraid to drive, maybe he *did* prefer walking.

Now all this time we had taken for granted that the store was doing all right, and it wasn't until Uncle Theos died that we found out what was happening to it since Pa wasn't there. Ma said she should have had her eyes open, but since we weren't dependent on the store any more for our living (Pa had seen to that) she hated to let Uncle Theos think she didn't trust him. That's what he'd always say when she did ask him about it: "Don't you trust me, Alma?" Personally I wasn't interested in business of any kind, I wanted to become a writer when I finished school, and Uncle Theos kept Ma satisfied with a small check now and then, not quite looking at her as he cussed the new department store cutting into our business, not to mention the chain store.

There was the drive to the cemetery to bury Uncle Theos. They'd just made the road a county trunk line, and it was our first ride on the new macadam. I was at the wheel now with Ma beside me, and Ernie in back with Aunt Calixta. I could see him in the rear-view mirror, a big, good-looking kid with apple-red cheeks and a roguish smile, sitting forward, his elbows on his knees, gazing dumbly at the floorboard, all the smart-aleckness knocked out of him, leaving him kind of helpless. During the wake he had cried a lot, and why wouldn't he? There was scarcely a thing a boy could desire that Uncle Theos hadn't got for him. He had started college, but now he wouldn't be going on—not that he wanted to go into the store any more than I, he was interested in electronics, but he and his mother were dependent on the store: it was all they had. "I don't know what's to become of us," Aunt Calixta kept repeating, a slender, stunned little woman unused to tears, her big gray eyes dry and burning. And Ma kept saying to me: "If she could only cry. If she could only just once cry."

It all made me think of a day I had almost forgot about until then—one of those mildly warm, pungent autumn days, most of the leaves fallen and dried brown until they crackled underfoot like cornflakes, smelling clean and sweet, and yet a little dusty. It was the only time I ever walked into the country with my father—my mother worried too much about snakes and wet feet and poison ivy—but this particular Sunday she had driven somewhere with Uncle Theos to attend an old aunt's wake, so didn't know we hadn't just taken our regular walk in town.

We went up to the west end of Main Street, but instead of turning left across the new Wisconsin bridge, the way the cars go, we climbed over a fence (Pa boosted me over) and crossed a cow pasture that has since been made into a city park. Then we hit the levee with its narrow path on top, the smooth blue Wisconsin River on one side, and on the other the browning fields with their last clumps of goldenrod, clusters of purple asters and, beyond, the sharp black woods reaching into the far corners of the hazy white sky. This was the walk my father would have liked to take every Sunday, but Ma said it was no place for a woman with high heels, and besides she wanted to see something where she walked: the new fall coats, the new bungalows and, above all, the new cars. And so because she preferred city sidewalks to country paths bordered with tall wispy weeds, I imagined I did too, and perhaps that kept me from enjoying this walk with my father as much as I could have.

I remember the way the dog went dashing off after nothing, just glad not to have to watch out for cars, and then we'd hear him barking far ahead. "That fool animal! What's he up to now?" Pa asked, but his voice was soft, and I could see that he was enjoying himself. He didn't stop to rest even once, or put his hand to his chest, and the way he could make stones skip on the water! They just sank for me, but for him they skipped and skipped, only his arm soon tired, and he suggested that we sit for a bit on the levee in the sun. It was then that he began to talk.

"You know, son, a feller has to look ahead." He tossed another stone in the water but didn't bother to make it skip. "Ever think about when you're a big feller?"

I kept him waiting for an answer, just looking at the river. That was to get back at him for saying "feller" instead of "fellow" as I'd been taught in school. "Nope," I finally said, which wasn't exactly the King's English either, and certainly not true.

"As I see it, you don't care much for the store," he continued. "Never drop in or anything."

I didn't have to answer that. He already knew how much I thought of having to take off and put on people's shoes for them.

"No, as I see it, you don't fit too good in your old man's shoes." Trying to make a little joke of it, he turned to me and smiled, only I was having neither his jokes nor his smiles in that bad grammar! "You're for somethin' better, somethin' higher," he went on more seriously. "Somethin' that'll take longer, but will be somethin' once you get it! Am I right?"

So that I wouldn't have to say anything, I just nodded. Then I realized that he must have noticed me scribbling at the dining-room table long after my homework was finished, instead of being outdoors after supper with Ernie and the neighbor kids, roasting spuds in the autumn bonfires, or playing Crack-the-Whip and Pussy-Wants-A-Corner.

"That's how I figured," said my father, looking way

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across the river, past the yellow sandbars, past the marshes to the purple-blue Baraboo bluffs. "Well, then," he said getting up, "that's how I'll go on figuring. Just wanted to make sure is all."

I think of all this years later as my mother and I drive to the cemetery to decorate Pa's grave on Father's Day. I think of how it seemed a long ride then, how you felt you were really going Somewhere, but now on the concrete with its black line racing down the middle as it shortcuts through the marshes straight as an arrow, a white fence on either side, it's no ride at all, hardly enough out there and back to cool off after supper. I think of how the macadam wore out and They widened the road to make it a state highway. I think of how They cut through the steepest hill, laying it open to bleed its brown sand, and covered the new roadbed with heavy gravel. I remember becuase at Cousin Alvina's funeral a sign read *Loose Gravel* and we skidded on the turns, and Ma hollered at me to slow down: she was more nervous than sad that trip: Alvina was only a second cousin.

I don't know exactly when the white fence was put up—there is no family funeral to mark it by—but it came soon after a carful of young people skidded into a tree and were two of them killed. I don't remember which Memorial Day it was there for the first time, but I'm pretty sure we had already turned in our Paige for a new Nash, I'm pretty sure of that. Anyway, a Standard Oil truck crashed through the fence one night, and I came along with a girl right after. We watched them fish the driver out of the lake, and after that they began oiling those roads. They weren't a bit skiddy then, there weren't stones flying up at your fenders, and those oiled-gravel roads, once they wore down a bit, were the smoothest-driving roads you could ask for. Of course when the holes came there was nothing rougher, and while the jolts you got didn't throw you like the old sand ruts, they sure jarred every bone in your body, every tooth in your head. So much for progress.

I don't know why I dwell on these changes in the road to the cemetery unless they sort of trace the way I have come to feel about my father. Now in the cement period I want to think about him, but in the loose gravel, and even the oiled gravel, I still didn't want to, I didn't want to remember, I still wanted to forget, or rather, I didn't want to admit I remembered. I didn't want to remember how I didn't feel bad hardly at all when he died, and how I almost hated him because he wouldn't get us a car.

Why did it seem so important then? Today no one notices too much whether you have a car or not—it's more a question of whether or not you really need one to get about. But then—perhaps because cars hadn't been around all that long—it seemed to make all the difference between being Someone and not being. It became a kind of symbol.

Now as we turn through the cemetery gates my mother begins to cry a little, but there's not much cry left in her any more, only the desire to feel once again the richness of the sorrow she once knew. "We'll put some flowers on your Uncle Theos's grave, too," she says. "I don't see why Calixta didn't come along. It makes me feel bad as her to come out here, but, my land, she and Theos sure had everything while they had it. Just looking at his grave ought to bring it all back."

I think of how the store lasted until Depression, thanks to Ma's help with Pa's money, but when That came we said good-by to it. "Some of us has got to have something left to take care of the rest of us," Ma said.

I think of how all through college I wrote short stories, and how not too long after graduation some of them began to get accepted by the literary magazines. Then a first novel was published, and a second—

We twist and turn through the narrow little cemetery drives with grass growing between the wheel tracks, the tombstones kneeling on either side, and I think of Aunt Calixta and Ernie losing their house and coming to live with us, selling their car, a beautiful new Marmon, and riding with us, Ernie crabbing about his job at the filling-station, blaming his father for it, blaming his father for everything.

Now we stop at my father's grave with the inexpensive little tombstone he had ordered, himself, from his hospital bed. "So my wife won't splurge," he had confided to the nurse on duty. And then before getting out of the car I tell my mother. At last I tell her what Pa said to me that day he died, and the day long before when we sat on the levee in the hazy autumn by the river.

I should stop here, with the implication that I became a famous writer while Ernie never did get away from that filling-station or some equally odious job. But life isn't a story. It doesn't always make a point or teach a moral—at least not one that's very commendable. It's just life.

As a boy I probably started writing because I felt deprived and bitter because of my father's thrift. Then when all that life insurance made it possible for me to go on writing, that certainly seemed preferable to getting a job like Ernie's. But once Ma and I had everything we wanted, writing in itself began to mean less and less to me. It became just another job, which it probably is, but I didn't want a job, I didn't really want to work, I just wanted *to be someone*. So I stopped writing, no big deal, I just stopped. Perhaps if my mother hadn't died suddenly, like Uncle Theos after a stroke, I would have gone on longer for her sake; but since I hadn't married there was no one to consider but myself. Eventually, of course, I had to have something to keep me busy, so I took a part-time job in a bookstore where I could read all the other writers without having to buy their books—a bit of Pa's thrift creeping out?

As for Ernie, he married a girl whose father owned a whole fleet of filling-stations, with his own oil company to supply them, so Ernie has a soft desk job that leaves him ample time to pursue electronics, still his chief interest and one he can now well afford. Aunt Calixta lives with the young couple who are expecting a baby, and rides around with her wealthy in-laws in their Cadillacs, having even more, much more than she had with Uncle Theos and the old Mitchell.

As I say, I should have ended this story when I was ahead. But I'm really not the hero type, and my father would be the last one to want anyone to make a hero of him. □

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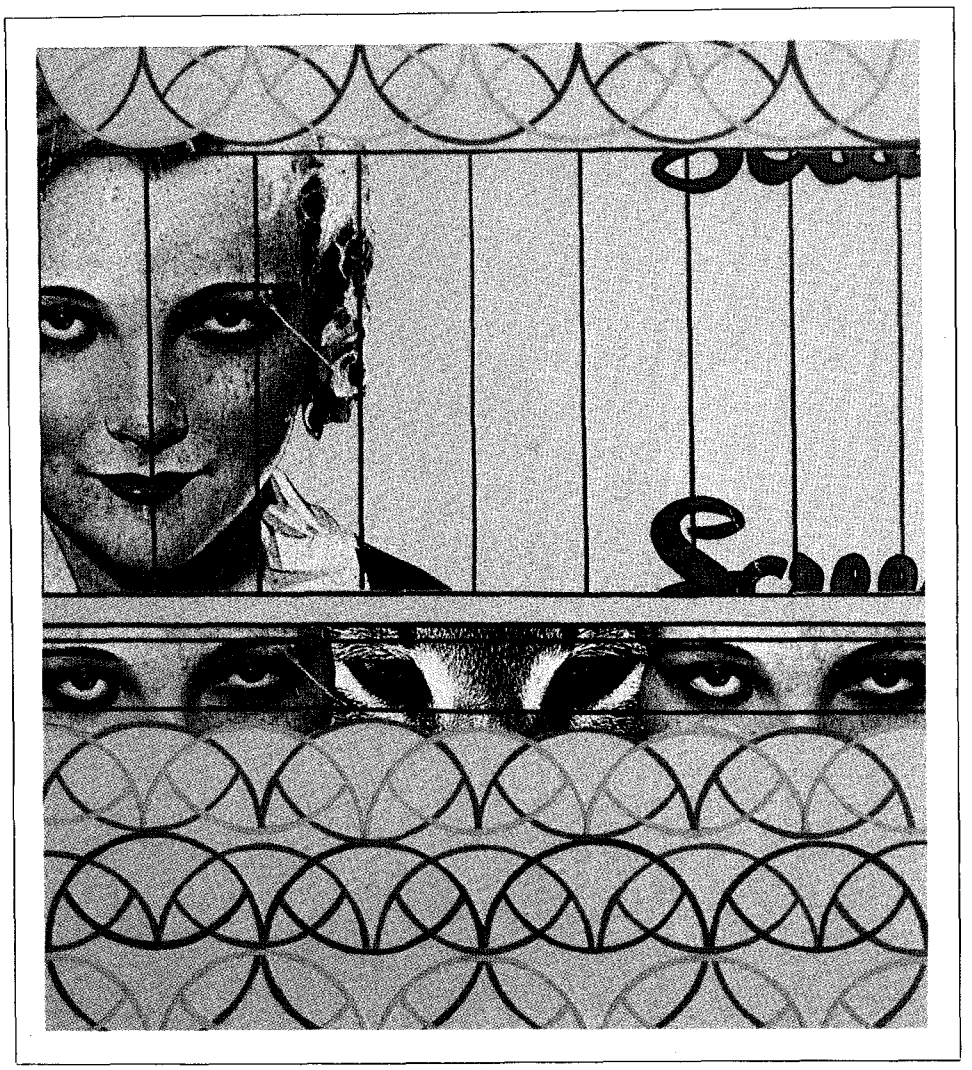
THE FUNNY WAY SHE WINDS UP

PAULA NEWCOMER



She's taken to wearing black. At first, a pair of old corduroy jeans she'd thrown into the rag bag because the pockets were ripped, and a black wool sweater, new just last year. The sweater is pilled up from washing it in the machine. She never follows the manufacturer's instructions. She reads labels carefully when she buys something new—colorfast, dry clean only, indigo dyes used, wash separately—but eventually everything gets tossed into the permapress cycle. Now she wishes her washing machine, the Sears Soil Saver, was black, but she's never seen a set of black washers and dryers. At the time she'd wanted the set in coppertone, but those were not on sale, and that was some time ago when she had a husband and a home in the suburbs, when she was the black sheep of the neighborhood wives. Now the clothes she feeds into her dusty white machines are black, all various shades of black: Blue-black, gray-black, silvery-black, bankruptcy, bloodthirsty, bystander, battleship-black.

Her lover thinks it's funny at first, these black outfits of hers. She shops for groceries—for the powders and fabric softeners to sweeten up the fuzzballs of her sweaters and jeans—in a black felt hat and a matching wool coat which is mannish and stylish this year; it falls below her knees. Her black suede shoes are weatherproofed carefully for the winter slush. She is quite a sight, she knows, climbing out of her dented old Dodge van with its shiny new paint job into the winter-white parking lots throughout town. Her complexion is fair, her hair blonde, the kohl around her eyes startling.

As a joke, her lover brings her a black carnation, one of those silk flowers. He brings it to her in a red and yellow paisley box, nestled inside white tissue paper. She is very moved; tears fill her eyes as she lifts it from the box. He has never seen her cry before. She holds the flower up to her mouth and runs the silky petals over her lips. A tear slides down her cheek. He watches her lick the tear away. Then she goes to the bathroom and brings out her nail scissors. She clips the single white pearl from the center of

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the flower and replaces it with a black button from her sewing box. "There," she says, holding it up to the light. "There." Her lover feels strange suddenly, as if this has happened before, as if someone has tapped him on the shoulder and left the room quickly, before he can identify the touch. He watches her pin the flower to her coat, watches her pirouette for him in front of the long, hall mirror. "Sugar," he says, coming up behind her to fold his arms around her waist, "are you okay?" She looks at him in the mirror. "*Sugar*?" she repeats. She turns to face him. "They dye these flowers for funeral and wedding bouquets, don't they?" He doesn't know what to say. He laughs. "Black isn't exactly a natural either, now is it?" he says. She looks at him seriously, suspiciously. "Wouldn't another flower like this—a rose, say, look good on my winter hat?" He nods. "Yes," she says, grabbing her hat from the clothes tree by the door. "Roses always look as if they're just dying to speak to you." She pulls her hair up and tucks it inside her hat. She walks out the front door towards the driveway. He watches her step carefully inside the footprints he's made in the snow coming up the front walk. He is standing in the doorway watching her go, and the cold air blows past him into the house; he can feel it circling the rooms behind him, driving out all the heat. At the car she turns. "Well, are you coming with me or not?" she says. She laughs and tips her hat at him. Her hair spills like cream over her coat.

They are living in Boston now. He met her in Ocean City, Maryland, on the boardwalk. He watched her walk up to a cannoli/ice cream stand, unlock the side door and step inside. He watched her lift back the heavy wooden window sashes and secure them. He watched her make a fresh pot of coffee. He wondered why he'd never noticed her before.

He'd been sitting on the bench across from her booth watching the sea since six that morning. His band had busted up the night before and his girlfriend had left with the drummer; he hadn't been to bed. When the boardwalk had filled up with joggers and bicyclers, he'd turned away from the sea to watch them. Purple was a popular color that year, he remembers. The seniors strolling by wore matching purple windbreakers. A toddler had walked by with his parents; their matching T-shirts said, *I'm so horny the crack of dawn looks good to me.*

He sat on the bench watching her prepare the booth for the day's business. Around eight that morning, after she'd sold several pastries and finished her third cup of coffee, she stood up and stripped her sweatshirt up over her head. She'd turned away from him slightly, but he saw the purple rosebuds of her breasts before she leaned down to pull something from beneath the counter. He looked quickly up and down the boards to see if anyone else had noticed. A kid was roller skating backwards; a couple hauled a child up between them by pulling on his arms and swinging him gently down to the ground; an old woman in a flowered mumu concentrated on her tiny elfin steps and the placement of her cane. She popped up inside the booth again, her back still bare. She pulled a T-shirt over her head and pulled her hair out of its pony tail, brushing it carefully, conscientiously, before securing it in the rubber band again. Then she sat down and stared across the way at him, twirling her coffee cup between her hands. He wanted to kiss her mouth. Before this day is over, he thought, watching her, I'm going to kiss that mouth.

All day long he watched her. He watched her serving up ice cream and fudge brownies, milkshakes and root beer floats, lemonade, coffee. He watched her serving thin people, fat people, old and young; watched her taking quarters from sticky little fingers, from little kids whose noses didn't quite reach the counter. All day long, except when he got up to pee twice and once for a slice of pizza and a Coke, he watched her. When she wasn't busy, when she wasn't wiping or counting or mixing, she sat and stared across the way at him, staring right through him, he thought. She drank twelve cups of coffee throughout the day (he counted) and ate nothing. About nine that evening, an orange moon came up slowly and sat expectantly on the lap of the sea. The moon appeared distorted, squared off at both ends, until it pushed up off the black horizon, rounded out and rose in its loop back towards them.

When she lowered the wooden sashes and locked up the booth, he followed her down the boardwalk. She led him off into the sand past cottages and cabins labeled with crude wooden signs: Intensive Care Unit, SeaEscape, Skid Rowe—The Rowe Family. She turned to look back at him several times, but said nothing. He followed her down the beach to a huge white house sheltered by scrubby bushes and a wall of white stone. He followed her up onto the front porch. An old woman sat in a rocker watching the ocean. She wore a bathrobe the color of the sand in front of her. Her white hair was twisted into a bun at the top of her head. "Aunt Belle, this is . . ." She hesitated, looking at him closely for the first time since he'd followed her. "Mac," he supplied. "Mac," she said. "This is Mac." His heart had leaped over the porch railing and circled the house when she said his name.

"It's been a lovely, hot day, hasn't it?" Aunt Belle said.

"Yes," she said, sitting down beside the old woman. He leaned against the porch railing, apprehensive, thinking she would ask him to leave then.

"Was it busy today, dear?" Aunt Belle said.

"Yes," she answered.

"I don't mind telling you, Mac, I don't care much for tourists, but it's our business," the old woman said. "You a native?"

"No," he said. "I'm just here for the summer." He sat down next to her. "I'm native," Aunt Belle said. "One of the few." The three of them sat quietly for some time, rocking slowly in their chairs, staring at the sea in front of them. Then the old lady excused herself and went inside the house.

This is the part he doesn't remember well, but he knows she led him to her room. The room is off the front porch and it's all windows, earthen pots of dried flowers lined up against an endless row of windows. She sits on a loveseat facing the sea. He sits beside her. He says, "I watched you today for sixteen hours." "Fifteen hours," she says. "And you watched the crazies on the boardwalk

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and the ocean, too." "No, you," he says. "Only you." She laughs; he thinks she laughs then. "I want to kiss you," he'd said. "Maybe," she said. "Maybe you will."

This is what he remembers, but it's like being in a great storm after a shipwreck. He remembers her white body circling over him, the dried flower pods rubbing against the window panes, great gusts of wind circling over them, and the stillness of the room. He remembers her smiling; smiling and watching him from the windows, from the booth, from the porch. He remembers her sinking slowly and taking him with her. He remembers the wind at the windows and the moon watching them.

In the morning, before she leaves the room to shower, he grabs her hand. "I'm not leaving so fast," he says. "In case you're interested."

They open the booth early. Part of that day, she sits on the bench across from him, watching him serve up ice cream cones and collecting quarters from sticky little fingers. Part of the day, she sits turned away from him, watching the sea.

In September, she closes up the booth. She earns enough money in the six months it's open, she tells him, to support herself and her aunt well. She kisses Aunt Belle goodbye and makes sure the next door neighbors know she's leaving now for Boston. He kisses Aunt Belle goodbye, too, and follows her there. All summer long the old woman moved like a ghost between her room and the front porch; she'd talked only of tourists and the weather. He'd grown fond of her, nonetheless, he thinks.

In Boston, she has a little carriage house near the university. It sits between two large white-columned houses; professors live in these houses up front. She gives him his own room. "I take continuing education courses at night, but I'll be around during the day," she says. She shows him the three courses she is taking that fall: The Anthropology of Loss in Primitive Cultures, Filmmaking, and Woodworking for Beginners. "We'll split all expenses," she says. "And the housework—right down the middle." He gets a job playing in a blues band. This way he works at night and gets to spend the days with her.

When her Aunt Belle dies three years later, she leaves him there to stare at her funny Super-8 movies—him making snow angels and clowning in the snow, interspliced with her stripping seductively in the backyard. She leaves him there among her handmade bookshelves with their tricky dove tail joints, her spice rack half finished, sawdust heaped like sand dunes on the kitchen floor. She leaves him there with her text books still lying open about the empty rooms, her notebooks piled up beside her bed. She is gone for a month. One night he picks up a woman at the club and brings her home. He is careful to make love to her in his bed, not hers, where they usually sleep.

When she returns, she has sold the house. She brings back a trunk of Belle's old clothes with her. That first night, she parades in front of him in Belle's fine, old, bone-white underwear. She wears Belle's old black hat to bed. He sings a funny song to her while he undresses her, that song about taking all your clothes off—"but leave your hat on," he croons. When they make love, he cries out, "oh, you, only you," like he did that first night in the other house. He tries to remember that first time, the first night in the other bedroom. He can remember the windows, the moon, the sea, but he can't remember how he got there anymore. He can't get enough of her this first night she comes back to him. He nuzzles up to her while she's sleeping. He touches her gently and holds himself and her, holding in his good fortune all night. In the morning, he sees the hat has fallen off the bed and he leans over to pick it up. He untwists two red cherries from the hat brim and tapes them to his chest, over his nipples, so she'll laugh when she wakes up.

She gets up tired; she doesn't laugh. "You're sad," he says. "I understand." "No, I'm tired," she says. She wears the hat throughout breakfast. She sits across from him in her lacy white underwear and drinks cup after cup of coffee while he eats a large breakfast. He suggests they go to the Planetarium in the afternoon, but she says, "No, you go." "Come with me," he says. "No," she says. "I don't want to go alone," he pleads. "I want to be with you." "No, you go," she says, sharply, "and if you need some company, take that other woman with you." He is startled. She never speaks like this. And how does she know? She has caught him.

Of course she does not know, but now she does. It's after this that she begins wearing black. No, it's not her Aunt Belle, she says. No, it's not him, she says. "You bastard, you," she says. "Don't flatter yourself." She smiles. It's nothing, she says. Nothing. A phase, maybe? he asks. No, nothing, she says. Shall I stay? he wonders. He's afraid to ask.

"Nothing will compare to that first time you followed me home, will it?" she asks him once. "It's better now," he says. "Fifteen hours," she says. "God, fifteen hours I hardly dared look at you because I wanted you so much." He's not sure he understands her anymore.

She buys these things: Thin black candles, an ebony music box, soft black wool wall hangings, heavy cast iron cookware. A friend gives her a skull. It's a real skull from a steer; the horns are splintered and there are tufts of ragged rawhide around the eye sockets. She places it on the hearth in the room where they spend most of their days together. When his band practices at the house, someone asks about the skull. "She's into death images," he jokes. He says this, but it doesn't strike him as funny. When they leave, he asks her about the skull again. "It looks nice against the gray slate," she says. "I like the contrast." She bakes black bread once a week inside the fireplace in her black cookware. She serves the bread with a spicy black bean soup. She says the recipe is from Ethiopia. She buys a painting to hang over the fireplace. It's a black canvas. He can't see any figures in it, but she assures him there's a man and a woman in there somewhere. He sees what pleasure these new things bring her, so eventually he brings her the flower. Soon she has a tulip or a carnation pinned to all her dark shirts. Soon she is taking dancing lessons. She looks good in her black leotard dancing by the gray windows in the room where their winter fires burn. She buys a black bikini. She says they can rent the room in her old Aunt Belle's house for the summer. □

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T.R. HUMMER

WHAT SHINES IN WINTER BURNS

December sun sits low over hedgerows, glitter
Of morning bright on cottonfield frost, on the dead
Stalks left brittle in rows to crumble
Under rain and cold-snap ice. The sun, silver
Over silver trees, is surely a star, scarcely

Too brilliant to look on through the window
Of the school bus bounding over washboard gravel
Roads, noisy as a tin can tied to the tail
Of a bird-dog—bird-dog weather
This cold morning, when the smell

Of bob-white hangs close to the ground, keen
To a dog's nose as alum—the scent of passion
A boy cannot know himself, but has to follow
Watching the quivering nose of the dog freeze
In a perfect point. Alone in the bus

With the driver, in the front seat, the first
Stop on the route, I am wanting so hard
To be walking those fields and hedgerows
With a dog, gun-metal cold in my hand,
That the thought of the gun speaking death

Into the cold air is love, the covey breaking
Loud in the still morning, one bird black
Against that dim silver sun, the dark gun-barrel
Rising. In that dream I am a man
With power no boy ever learned

Anywhere a school bus might take him. I aim
My notebook out the windshield, sighting down
The spine of it, firing my desire
Over and over into the stiff dead stalks
The bus rattles through, not wondering whether love

Outlives the deaths we make for it:
I look for something, I pull the trigger, the gun
In my hand explodes, and I am a man about to say
Look, I am alive, I have touched the world
The way a man touches the body of the one

Woman he can never live without again.
But I do not say it, for suddenly I see
What I am aiming at: over the back of the notebook,
I am squinting at the body
Of a man half lost in dead silver cottonstalks,

Half in the road, a black man, frozen, silver,
Glinting with sunlight and frost. I shout,
But the driver knows, the bus squeals, stopping,
Quivering, hood pointing, tires
Not a foot from that shining head,

The driver saying *Stay here, stay here, don't look*
As he goes out the door, but too late, I have seen already
The man's right hand frozen to the whiskey bottle,
The left hand clutching together the patched denim coat,
And his dead eyes frozen open

Staring up at me, answering, *Boy, you will never*
Understand love until you lay your hand
Where mine is. Touch me. This is the body. I know.

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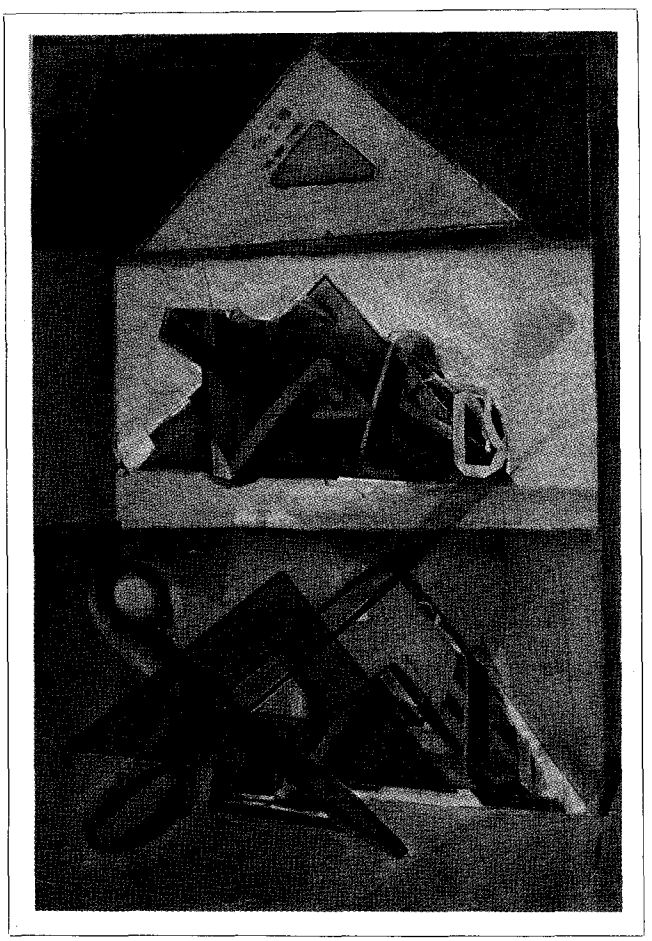
A JAR OF FANS

JEANNINE ATKINS



The window shade rustled and flapped. Sunlight blew into the room on a soft wind and fell like a yellow mat between two beds. Downstairs, the telephone rang. Eleanor heard clanging coathangers and mumbling from the next room, so she stayed in bed and kept her eyes only half opened. She glanced across the room she shared with Jill as a bedroom, painting studio, and performing arts center. The window shade lifted and Eleanor saw a framed space of grass, pink clover, and tiny purple flowers. A breeze moved a tree's shadow and turned the grass from green to brown then back again to green. Watching these changes every morning reminded Eleanor she was a painter and so there was a reason to get out of bed.

She heard Dan coming back up the stairs. "For me or Jill?"

"It's for you. Long distance."

"What time is it?" Eleanor sat up and pulled the sheet around her neck.

"Early. It sounds like your mother, or somebody like that." Dan lingered in the doorway as if he'd like, but didn't know how, to offer the compassion an early morning phone call from a parent was likely to require. Eleanor smiled to show he didn't have to say anything. It was comforting enough to have a friend who wore a real bathrobe and real slippers instead of the makeshifts and improvisations she was used to. Flannel, terrycloth, he's got some respect for tradition, Eleanor thought as Dan went down to the kitchen. She took the shirt flung across the bottom of Jill's bed and buttoned it on. They'd agreed that if they couldn't tell what a garment was intended to be (a jacket, a smock, a nightgown?) then it must be a bathrobe. They exchanged clothes as casually as they used each other's art supplies and books, exchanged clothes like amulets, for if you couldn't have your best friend with you during rough times then you should at least have her sweater. It was good to wiggle her toes in the holes of Jill's socks whenever she felt edgy.

Eleanor stepped over her curling watercolor paintings and went down the stairs. Here all the furniture was cast-off, mismatched, and tilting. Folded pieces of newspaper were stuck beneath almost every leg, and still they wondered when the bookcases would topple. The living room doubled as a guest room for old friends and acquaintances who thought Amherst was a decent stopover between Boston and California; so abandoned sleeping bags were heaped in the corner like a pile of lazy kittens. In the kitchen three bicycles leaned against each other with their wheels pointing every-which-way. Eleanor removed the phone from her wicker basket and said hello.

"Eleanor? It's your mother. Did I wake you up?"

Eleanor looked at the stove clock for the right answer. She tried to remember if someone changed the time last night, as they often did when it seemed either too early or too late to be going to sleep. But no, it really was eight o'clock and Mom was criticizing her for being in bed so late. "I was just getting up."

"You know I don't like to call so early, but I wanted to reach you before you took off somewhere. I'm afraid it's bad news."

Eleanor stood on her toes and balanced. It was her mother's phone call, her mother's bad news. She didn't have to help by saying anything more than "Oh."

"Your French grandmother . . ." Mom began. Eleanor came down off her toes to listen better. Mom always says *my* grandmother as if Grandmère was no relation to herself. She always calls her French although she's lived here sixty years. Why always emphasize the distance?

"Your grandmother," Mom repeated, "—we just got a call from your uncle—died yesterday."

Eleanor felt her own breath stop. Dan's face changed

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from studied not-listening to concern. "Just a minute," Eleanor said. She cradled the phone in her arms and brought it to the living room, the long, black extension cord snaking behind her. She draped a sleeping bag over her shoulders and head like a shawl, and felt better prepared to listen. "What happened?"

The interruption had made Mom impatient. "She was eighty-four, Eleanor. We were expecting this. You know she never fully recovered from the stroke she had when your grandfather died last winter."

"Someone must know what happened."

"Henri didn't give us the details. I think it was her heart."

Eleanor wanted to ask, "How can I believe this? Are you sure it's true?" but she pulled the sleeping bag lower over her forehead to stop the questions Mom was bound to call crazy.

"Your Uncle Henri and Aunt Nancy are going down this morning to make funeral arrangements. Hopefully the service will be on Saturday. I don't think Catholics are as strict as they used to be about that three-day-after rule."

Even now Mom wouldn't let Grandmère be. Catholics buried people on inconvenient weekdays because of queer mystical rules. Catholics, her mother had often told her, were pregnant much too often, thought plastic dolls would save their cars from flat tires and collisions, and were dull enough to teach poor gullible children that they were eating flesh and blood at Communion, so that kids went around thinking they were digesting Jesus in their stomachs. Catholics were not very bright, Eleanor learned, and one of the smartest things her father ever did was to marry her mother and leave the Church.

"Of course you don't have to go. I know you're very busy."

"Of course I want to go. I'll take a bus."

"Henri didn't think your cousins will be able to make it. Bob's job is very tight now and it's hard for Kathy to travel with the kids. It would be nice if you were there to help out with the arrangements."

Mom's telling me not to clutch the ends of this sleeping-bag cocoon, beat my imaginary wings, hurl myself off the sofa, and flap against the walls like a huge caught bird. Be realistic, Mom often told her, you make too much of things. She's asking me not to release the grief that's swirling in the bone-cage inside me. Don't let it turn into a gust, toppling the desk lamp, rattling the window. If I can't open that cage then I can't speak at all. Eleanor pulled the sleeping bag over her knees.

"Then you can find out the New York bus schedules?"

"Yeah."

"I guess we'll see you at their house tonight?"

"Yes. See you then." Eleanor started to put down the phone, but wanting to hear a word neither had yet said, wanting to hear it even if sunk in cliché, Eleanor added, "and give Dad my love."

Light appeared as a row of discs where an Indian bedspread sagged from five thumbtacks. Eleanor tied back the curtain and propped the window open. The morning mist had not yet risen on the day's heat, so she could hardly see the gently curving line where the Holyoke Range reached the sky. But the haze made those close things—water droplets, creases in blades of grass, wispy purple flowers—seem even nearer, more precisely seen.

Eleanor wanted to talk with Dan, but she was stopped by her memory of him entering the kitchen a few weeks ago, holding his cat in his arms so that all she could see was red matted fur. She hurriedly offered him an old flannel shirt to wrap the body in, to keep the flesh intact and keep it out of sight. They borrowed a snow shovel from a neighbor and looked by the stream behind the house for a secluded place with earth soft enough to dig. Eleanor was relieved when it was her turn to use the shovel. She felt uneasy watching Dan bend close to the ground, twisting his flushed face out of sight as if to examine the root-veined soil, as if when he rubbed his hand across his face he was wiping away only sweat. She tried to dodge mosquitoes, not wanting to disrupt the solemn tone by swatting, but when one landed on her neck she forgot herself and slapped it. The sudden noise shamed her, and she let her skin be bitten until the end of the burial.

Dan was sullen for a week afterwards. All three housemates worked at odd hours, so their expeditions were not usually reserved for weekends but were often decided by whim or a rumor of a natural phenomenon. They waited in chilly dark fields for comets that never showed up, craned their necks searching out constellations that seemed to appear in mixed-up patterns, and watched the sky's color change slowly at dusk and wondered if they were seeing the Northern Lights. But that week Dan would do nothing except sulk, until Eleanor grew impatient. "It's just karma," she said. "Everything happens in cycles, like day and night, the seasons, birth and death. You should learn to be at peace with it." Dan didn't even look up. "I liked the cat," he said.

Eleanor couldn't speak then and she couldn't speak now. Instead she thought about the last time she'd seen Grandmère, when Grandpère died in February. Uncle Henri had met her at the door and walked with her to the bedroom where Grandmère slouched in an armchair by the window. She who always seemed composed, who graced and gifted the chair with her momentary rest, now was sunken and dependent on the chair. When Eleanor had arrived Henri had whispered that Grandmère had had a stroke, but he didn't mention that she couldn't hear, couldn't move, was in pain and worn out.

Only Grandmère's hands seemed as knowing as ever. Her wrists rested on the chair arms and her hands rose straight up as if in exclamation, as if they were trying to press or hold back an invisible presence. Pieces of paper were crumpled, scattered, and piled on a writing table. Having lost most of her hearing, Grandmère relayed messages through these cards, but she did most of the writing herself. Henri urged her to talk. "She's the one who's deaf, not us," he complained to Eleanor. "The point was for us to write messages to her, but it's a waste of time for her to write to us. We can all hear." He was speaking as if Grandmère was not in the room. Eleanor turned from him to Grandmère. "I shouldn't be so sad," Grandmère had written. "We had more than sixty good years together."

Henri left the room, and they sat together and passed

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notes about phonecalls, visits, furniture, silverware, and books, citing who should have what, as if Grandmère wanted to give away the remaining pieces of her own life. "Of course," Grandmère's voice sounded sudden and loud, "all that will be yours." Grandmère waved her hand towards the bedroom she had made over into a painting studio when Eleanor's father left home. Her gesture seemed as casual as when she willed her French dolls to a cousin who liked foreign knick-knacks. Eleanor wasn't sure what she'd find in the studio and only nodded her thanks.

Eleanor wanted to ask about the piles of tied canvases and boxes of drawings, but just then Grandmère smoothed a strand of white hair behind her ear and handed Eleanor a note asking her to trim her hair. "I meant to make a beauty parlor appointment last week," she'd written. "Now it's too late." Eleanor felt nervous. She'd only ever trimmed Jill's curls and it didn't matter if they were uneven because the curls just sprang back tosseled. But she'd like to touch and help Grandmère and here was her chance. She wrote back, "Where can I find the scissors?"

Grandmère pointed to a bureau where Eleanor found a whole drawer full of scissors, one with slender blades, another tiny and wide, one with handles shaped like ostriches, and one with a blade made to look like a bird's beak. Eleanor chose that pair, found a pocket comb, and covered the rug around Grandmère's chair and feet with old newspapers. She stood anxiously behind her, twisted a bath towel around her shoulders, and brushed her hair against her neck. Grandmère sat up taller. Eleanor took a deep breath and snipped off half-an-inch. White strands curled and fell like feathers.

After a few minutes Grandmère felt her forehead and said, "That's good. I'm sure that's good enough."

Eleanor murmured, "Just a little more. Let me make sure it's even." She walked around the chair to take a closer look at Grandmère's face. Her bangs were straight. Her eyes showed pain. Eleanor finished arranging Grandmère's hair and spoke loudly. "You're beautiful." Grandmère shrugged the green towel off her shoulders and said she thought she'd take a nap.

Now Eleanor winced at the memory. What had separated them, what drew them apart? Eleanor began letters but didn't get past her own return address, knowing Grandmère didn't approve of places where women lived without husbands or fathers. Eleanor might as well be living nowhere. Grandmère, having lived eighty-four years without ever wearing slacks, would look at Eleanor's Levi's and ask, "Don't you ever wear anything else? Is that what all the girls wear in Amherst?"

"Yes. All the women."

"All?" Grandmère would insist, then sigh, "I like to see girls' legs."

Eleanor tried to explain that you couldn't do anything—you couldn't paint—in nice clothes. When she gave up and showed Grandmère some paintings she'd brought, Grandmère thought the self-portraits were unflattering and couldn't understand the paintings in which she'd made Jill look large and grand, spreading to the borders of the canvas, why she'd want to make a pretty friend look fat. Grandmère frowned at a drawing she'd just admired when Eleanor said it wasn't an image of Christ but of her housemate Dan. She didn't like the studies of rocks and asked, "What's wrong with painting something beautiful?" From Grandmère's landscapes you'd think the sky was always blue in France, and that poppies bloomed every time she painted. In her portraits Grandmère created delicate bow mouths and she straightened crooked noses, "because I might as well give people what nature didn't."

Eleanor was tired of Grandmère's rule that art includes only what's nice, as if art was etiquette and good manners could help you through life; yet when she was very young it was Grandmère who first taught her how to see. The only painting in their house was one of Grandmère's village scenes. Eleanor used to climb onto the radiator beneath it to touch its gritty surface, as pleasantly rough as her father's cheek in the morning before he shaved. She crawled off the radiator and walked slowly backwards, watching the shiny lumps of paint change into cottages, poplar trees, and clouds. It was magical the way a flat surface seemed like a real place, made her almost believe she'd been to France, because wasn't it there in her own dining room?

Grandmère used to visit their house carrying big newsprint pads and watercolor sets. She showed Eleanor how to make faces out of circles and turn cone-shapes into trees. Eleanor looked from her careful attempts at circle-faces and evergreen trees over to Grandmère's glamorous lap. No other lap was anything like it. Her other grandmother wore stiff shoes that encased even her ankles and a heavy black coat that drooped from her shoulders and smacked against her knees; but Grandmère wore rope-soled espadrilles with ribbons winding up her legs, and capes that swirled in loops around her.

"Does she think this is Paris?" Mom complained. "Does she think she's still twenty-one?" Mom made a point of serving meat on Fridays and talking about the pale, troublesome children of too-large families on their street, and Grandmère and Grandpère's visits stopped by the time Eleanor was six.

Eleanor folded up the sleeping bag and tossed it onto the pile in the corner. Outdoors the mist was beginning to disperse and the yard took on its own distinctive colors. Eleanor lifted the phone from the sofa and dropped it in its place on the kitchen floor. It buzzed, then was silent.

Dan looked up from a book. "Can I make you some tea?"

Ordinarily Eleanor would have declined the offer, since anyone could boil their own water and dump tea in a pot, but this morning even that seemed like too much effort and she was moved to accept. Grandmère had given the china teapot to her parents, and when Eleanor moved from her parents' house, she stole it from the back of a storage closet. Her parents drank instant coffee or tea from bags and didn't need a fancy pot. Jill and Dan liked it, and their care of the fragile china, and the way they so often sat around it, made them a sort of family. "We always use loose tea," they told guests, creating rituals and absolutes, "and we never know the right amount to put in."

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Eleanor took the cup Dan handed her by its rim. "My Grandmère just died."

"I'm sorry, Eleanor," Dan said. "Were you close?" The old world phrase rang curiously.

"Yes," Eleanor said, as if she had written and mailed all those letters, made all those visits, spent all those years together. "Yes." There was no doubt about it. They were very close.

Afternoon. Eleanor stepped off the local bus and looked up and down the street until she finally recognized a side porch. Forsythia, its yellow blossoms fallen, leaned against the screen windows. A breeze turned the pale undersides of leaves toward the sky. A bird landed on the split coconut shell hanging from the eave, flew away, and the coconut shell swung aimlessly. I must remember to fill it with grass or sunflower seeds, Eleanor told herself.

Living sixty years in America, Grandmère had learned to leave the goldenrod in her garden, rather than weed it out. She remembered ornamental gardens with elegant fountains, perfectly round pools, bushes clipped to look like roosters, spades, and hearts, trees chopped flat at the top, and paths made of bleached pebbles. Grandmère loved those parks but came to think that milkweed, as it burst into fluff, was the best part of a garden. She grew tomatoes among the pink roses. She objected to weeding the yellow dandelions from the lawn, but thought she owed that to her neighbors.

Eleanor's sandals flapped loudly on the porch and Uncle Henri opened the door before she had a chance to try the door or knock. "Hi, there," he said. "I saw you standing in the driveway. It's nice you could come. I'm afraid Bob and Kathy can't make it, or your brother. I guess it's pretty hard to reach him. No phone on his backpack." Uncle Henri clapped his hand onto Eleanor's shoulder and led her into the living room.

Eleanor kissed Mom, Dad, and Aunt Nancy. She sat beside the table that ordinarily held mail but now was covered with a basket of fruit piled on green raffia, cardboard bakery boxes tied with string, and greenhouse flowers lying in narrow white boxes. Eleanor lifted the tissue paper off a spray of lily-of-the-valley.

"Oh, yeah," Henri said. "We don't want to put you to work right away, though Nancy and I have been here since early this morning, but somebody has to take care of all that." He gestured toward the pink and orange flowers, crinkly paper, ribbons, and butter-stained boxes. "We need to start keeping a list of who gave what, and sooner or later do some thank-you calls and notes."

"The funeral is set for tomorrow. We're all hoping to drive back home in the afternoon, that's why there's a bit of a rush," Dad said.

"We want to get as much of this stuff cleared out before then as we can," Henri said. "Most of the furniture will just go with the house, and we've got a realtor in charge of that, but we're setting the valuables aside. It's quite a job with all the clutter."

"We always told her this would happen," Mom said, "but she never listened. I'll never know why she couldn't throw things out. Now we have to deal with all this."

"I'll get some vases from the pantry," Eleanor said.

"No, you just got off the bus," Henri said. "Relax a minute. Tell us what's new in your life. Haven't broken into the art world yet, have you? Sold anything?"

"We're just taking a little break from packing," Mom said. "Have one of these brownies. This might be all the dinner you'll get tonight."

"There might be some warm water left in the kettle if you want some tea," Dad said.

"I even discovered a couple of mugs on a back shelf," Mom said. "I could never stand drinking from those little teacups."

Eleanor sat in the velvet armchair and stroked its pile into various shades of red. The tassles on the bottom were maroon but the arm tops had worn to pink. Eleanor remembered pushing these chairs to the edges of the room when she was young, dancing around the curved pattern on the carpet, and trying to mimic the poses of plaster-cast ballerinas that balanced on the edges of the bookcase. She sat with Grandmère on the floor and they flexed their feet. While they stretched, Grandmère gave Eleanor advice about how to keep her balance by keeping her eyes fixed on one small thing, how important it was to keep her elbows from the imaginary audience, how to shape her arm to give the illusion of a bird's wing, and how to move to the rhythm of their own humming. Best of all Grandmère told her stories from ballets, like the one about swans who turned into women or women who changed into swans. Eleanor let herself be transported back to that time and saw Grandmère raise her arms in a circle above her head. "Ready for some practice?"

The granddaughter scrambled up, clutched the top of a chair, and began to bob up and down in pliés.

"Touch lightly." Grandmère took Eleanor's hand and placed it so it barely touched the makeshift barre. Eleanor returned to her pliés until, quickly bored with such a simple movement, raised her back leg to an arabesque, lifted her arms from the chair, and fell over. "I meant to do that," she said, getting up.

"Find just one thing to look at and it will be easier to keep your balance," Grandmère reminded her.

Eleanor looked around the room until she spotted the knobbly jar of Japanese fans. Grandmère had shown her how to open those paper sticks so that they unfolded to pictures of giant moths, ladies in red robes, and glittering pagodas. She loved to open and close them with a small twist of her wrists, changing the wonderful crescents back to sticks. "I'll watch the fans," Eleanor said.

"Fine." Grandmère continued doing pliés. The tips of her cardigan sweater touched her knees in points. Her skirt spread to a flat shelf between her knees as her stomach lowered and arced like a half-moon. "*Frappé,*" she called, and with pointed toes traced half-circles on the floor. "*Passé,*" she said, and Eleanor looked from her own socked foot to see what Grandmère was doing with hers. Calling out directions, Grandmère's voice rose from a deeper place than she used when speaking English.

Eleanor bobbed up and down, proud that she could finish ten pliés in the time it took Grandmère to finish one. Eleanor thought she was fussy, and stopped to see what took her so long and give her time to catch up.

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Grandmère carefully stretched her legs as if her life depended on keeping her shoulders even and her arms perfectly curved. What was she watching to keep her delicate balance?

Grandmère lifted her arms and stretched her neck. "*Relevé,*" she said, rising on her toes. "*Arabesque.*" She drew her foot behind her and raised it, let her hands rest on the air, lengthened her torso, and curved her neck. She moved with the silence and grace that suggests transformation. The floor seemed to change to a clear blue lake and her arms into wings, as Grandmère became, for that moment, a swan.

Eleanor looked around that same room now. Light passed through orange curtains and colored the room warmly. Henri had begun to place what he considered valuable on top of the old piano and marked the rest off as unwanted. An avocado plant bent over a party of tin ballerinas, Napoleon and his troops, and Japanese dolls. The ivory elephant with a compass fastened to its belly was missing from the party and added to Henri's collection of valuables. A shell filled with ocean sounds was left in place. Henri had set aside a lamp with a fleur-de-lisle base, but left the prism which, only that morning, had hung from its switch. He'd emptied a cut glass dish of its pinecones and dried seeds. He'd set aside silver-framed photographs of weddings and graduations.

Beneath the piano were boxes of trash. When Eleanor suddenly recognized the knobbly jar among the collection of things Henri was keeping, she glanced around the room and back to his throw-away carton. Among orange juice cans covered with magazine clippings, blue-jay feathers, ballpoint pens gilt-stamped with names of stores and insurance agencies, Eleanor spotted the Japanese fans.

She opened one fan to a picture of a woman in a hoop skirt. The woman's face was half-hidden by an opened fan, and underneath this picture were the script letters: "Shelburne Grille. Atlantic City." Eleanor closed the fan, stood up, and waved it open across her face.

Henri laughed. "She really was one for saving things. She must have had those fans from before we were kids. People used to swipe those from hotels as souvenirs."

"I like these fans," Eleanor said.

"Great. Help yourself."

Eleanor put the fan in her back pocket. "I'm going upstairs. Grandmère said that I can have her painting studio."

"You mean you'll take care of cleaning out that room?" Henri said. "I'd been wondering what we were going to do with all that stuff."

Eleanor opened a window to air out the studio, then began to yank open drawers stuck from the summer humidity or years of disuse. She found drawers full of broken pastels settled in dusty cotton beds, crumbling gum erasers, boxes of unsharpened pencils, and tins of watercolors with French labels. One drawer smelled of turpentine. Another, full of charcoal pencils, smelled like a campfire. A drawer of crayons smelled of sweet wax, and Eleanor pulled the drawer completely out and held it to her face as if it were a bouquet of flowers.

A stack of sketchbooks was under the drafting table. Eleanor untied the string around them as if even the dust was precious, and opened the drying, fragile pages. Grandmère had taken a figure drawing class in which it seemed the models didn't have navels or breasts, never scowled, smoked cigarettes, or got tired. In her landscapes, she used too much white on her palette and blurred away contrasts, dulled the colors, and didn't pay attention to distinctions. Faces aren't like circles and trees don't really look like cones.

Surely Grandmère had seen more than she'd admitted. Once when Grandmère visited her former home in northern France, she sent Eleanor a postcard that said, "I was glad to see this town again. It's in the painting hung in your house. I wanted to see if I got the colors right." Eleanor could imagine Grandmère's pleasure as she wrote, but she hadn't answered her own question. Did she get the colors right? Did she believe that she did?

Eleanor imagined Grandmère lifting her face to take in an eyeful of sky, dunking her brush in unmixed oil paint, and sweeping it across the canvas. Grandmère painted the whole blue sky—not just a piece of it—across the entire top half of her canvas. With a single stroke she made herself a sky and mountains and trees. The pictures did look amateurish, but Grandmère's gesture was something else. Eleanor tied the string back around the sketchpads and put them away.

She went into Grandmère's bedroom where the rhinestone-studded sweaters, lace petticoats, and embroidered skirts would soon be put in bags and sent to Catholic Charities. Eleanor put on the velvet opera cape and a brittle, wide-brimmed hat. On the bureau she found a pair of papier-mâché earrings shaped like yellow roses, and a box of swivel sticks and palettes of eyeshadow. She read the labels on the bottom of the make-up: pearl blue, lavender, opal, dusk, forget-me-not blue. Grandmère never painted her eyelids anything but blue, but what a range she had.

Eleanor found a sable brush beside the bathroom sink, dipped it in the lilac powder, and painted her right eyelid. She examined the color in the mirror, and painted the other eyelid turquoise. She grinned at the reflection of her varicolored eyelids, straw hat, and fake-fur-collared cape. Eleanor scrubbed her face with creamy soap and watched the murky water spiral down the drain. A velvet cape wouldn't keep her shoulders balanced, and a fancy hat wouldn't keep her head held high. Sunday hats and capes would never go with bluejeans, but she had her own resources, her own amulets. She thought of Dan's plaid flannel and Jill's holey socks.

Eleanor's hand was reflected in the mirror as she raised it to take off the hat. It reminded her of Grandmère's as she touched the stack of notes citing arrangements and gifts. "You can have anything you want from the studio," she had written. Anything you want. Nothing must be taken and anything could be discovered, but it was Eleanor's choice. Eleanor let her hand stop in mid-motion and curved her fingers slightly so that it pointed toward the window and became shaped like a perching bird: poised, still, in the moment before flight. □

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THE FAMILY ALBUM

WELCH D. EVERMAN

One day, I received a photograph in the mail.

It was an ordinary three-by-five snapshot, and it came in a small manila envelope.

There was no return address.

According to the postmark, it had been mailed in the city the day before.

There was nothing unusual about the photo.

It was a picture of a woman I had never seen before.

She was young, about my age, tall and very thin, with long dark hair and pale eyes.

She was attractive but certainly not beautiful.

The photograph was a full-length portrait.

The young woman stood alone against a stark white wall, smiling into the camera.

Her teeth were very bright.

She was dressed casually, in a plaid blouse and blue jeans.

I had no idea who she was or why the photo had been sent to me.

There was no note in the envelope.

For the next few days, I paid close attention to the young women in the neighborhood and in the office building where I worked.

I thought perhaps the woman in the photograph was someone I had seen many times before but had never noticed.

I didn't find her.

The second photo arrived a week later, again on a Friday morning.

Again, there was no return address or note, only the picture.

In this one, she stood before the same wall and wore the same jeans.

She was naked to the waist.

Her shoulders were very narrow, and her breasts were small and round.

There was something very fragile about her.

I studied the photograph closely, then put it away with the first.

In the third picture, she wore only a pair of lace panties as white as the wall behind her.

Her legs were long, slender, and shapely.

They were her best feature.

On the fourth Friday, the mail was late.

I stood in the downstairs vestibule and waited for the postman for more than an hour.

As I had expected, the fourth photograph showed her naked.

She stood there against the wall, her arms at her sides, facing the camera.

There was nothing provocative about her pose.

She was not smiling.

She seemed very unsure of herself, as if she thought perhaps I would not like her.

Of course, I had no reason to believe that she was sending me the pictures herself.

It seemed more likely that someone I knew was playing a joke on me.

Still, I didn't know anyone at the office who would do such a thing, and I had no friends outside of work.

I didn't mention the photographs to anyone.

When I walked through the city, I began to look for her.

Whenever the phone rang, I thought she might be calling.

I even expected her to come to my door.

She didn't.

In the fifth photograph, she was still naked, and she held her small breasts in her hands.

Her eyes were closed, and her lips were parted.

She was exciting and yet somehow delicate.

I kept the picture with me in my pocket for several days, though of course I showed it to no one.

On Friday morning, I met the mailman in the vestibule and took the envelope up to my apartment at once.

She was touching herself.

Her face was pale, and her muscles were tense.

She looked weak, exhausted, as if she were about to collapse.

In the next photo, she sat naked at the foot of the white wall with her knees drawn up and her face hidden in her hands.

She seemed to be crying.

She had done what she had done for me.

I was sure I would not see her again.

There was another envelope in my box Friday morning.

Now she was standing in a kitchen, scrambling eggs.

She wore a long blue robe with a floral print, and her hair was pinned into a bun at the back of her neck.

She was not looking at the camera.

It seemed she did not know that she was being photographed.

I began to wonder who was taking these pictures.

It made me angry that someone else was with her, seeing her in her own home, speaking to her.

There was someone who did not have to know her through photos.

In the following weeks, I received pictures of her cleaning her living room, shopping in a supermarket, reading a popular novel, and sleeping in a large brass bed.

I was watching her live her daily life, but there was something wrong.

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She was not what she seemed to be, I was sure.

There was always the other one, the one who took the pictures.

She and her photographer were teasing me.

I wanted to tell her what I thought of her pranks, but of course that was impossible.

The weeks passed, and each Friday there was a new photograph in my mailbox.

I no longer wanted them.

She was making a fool of me.

Still, I opened the envelopes.

In one picture, she was eating a sandwich and watching television.

In another, she sat on a bench in a park.

Sometimes she was dressed casually, but just as often she wore clothes in the latest style.

In a few pictures, her hair was in rollers, and she wore no make-up.

In time, I came to know her likes and dislikes, her habits, her taste in clothes and furniture.

I had seen every room of her home, though I still had no idea where she lived.

She seemed to be very nice, unpretentious, intelligent, and loving.

Her cat appeared in several photos, and she seemed to care for it very much.

I wanted to like her.

I wanted to believe that I knew her, but I didn't.

I couldn't trust her.

There was always the other one, the one with the camera.

I knew that she didn't really care about me.

I put the photographs in a closet and tried to forget them.

The envelopes kept coming, and I wanted to throw them away or put them in the closet unopened, but I couldn't.

When I was out on the street, I still looked for her, though I didn't want to meet her.

Then one Friday morning, I opened the envelope and found a picture of her standing in front of the white wall where I had seen her for the first time.

She wore the same plaid blouse and jeans, and she looked into the camera, smiling.

She held a small rectangular mirror in front of her, and, in the glass, I could see a camera on a tripod.

There was no one else in the room.

She was taking the photograph herself, using an automatic timer.

I was very happy.

Now we could start over.

I took the pictures out of the closet and bought a photo album for them.

She seemed happy, too.

She went out of town for a couple of days and sent me a picture of herself sunbathing on a deserted beach.

During Thanksgiving week, there was a photograph of her dressed in an old-fashioned apron, making a huge turkey in her oven.

At Christmas, I got a picture of her trimming a tree in her living room.

Later, in the winter, she went skiing.

The photo showed her alone at the top of the slope, dressed in a bulky down jacket, a red knitted cap, and goggles.

One Friday, I had to be at the office early.

I couldn't pick up the mail until I got home in the evening.

The photograph that day showed her playing with the cat on the living room sofa.

After that, I got into the habit of collecting my mail Friday evenings, as I did every other day of the week.

Sometimes, if I was tired or if I decided to eat out and see a movie after work, I would pick up the Friday and Saturday mail on Saturday morning.

One night, I went out drinking with some of the people from the office.

It was a party for the office manager who was being transferred to another city.

I had to be there, because I was taking over his job.

I didn't get home until after two, and I slept late on Saturday.

When I went down for the mail in the afternoon, my box was empty.

It had not been pried open.

There simply was nothing there for me.

Some bills came on Monday, but there was no manila envelope.

On Friday, I waited for the postman downstairs.

He handed me the mail.

"Is that all?" I asked him.

He shrugged.

I was sure that something had happened to her.

It was my fault.

I had been taking her for granted.

Now I had lost her.

On the following Friday, I went down to the vestibule an hour before the mail usually arrived.

I had not slept well the night before.

That morning, the postman was very late.

I went out to the street every few minutes to look for him.

Soon it was time for me to leave for the office, but I didn't go.

I waited.

The postman arrived at noon.

It was not the man who usually worked the route.

I asked about the regular carrier, and his replacement told me he was on vacation.

I told him my name, and he handed me a mail-order catalogue.

While he put the mail into the other boxes, I explained to him that I was expecting an important letter.

He said he was sorry but he had nothing else for me.

I accused him of having lost it.

I said that he had no right to show so little respect for others and their property.

It was his job to deliver the mail, I said, and to deliver it on time.

I was shouting.

He ignored me.

I was more than three hours late for work.

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I began to check my box every morning.

Two weeks passed before I received another photograph.

In this one, she sat on the floor in front of the white wall with her face turned away from the camera.

I saw her only in profile.

It was another three weeks before she began to smile at me again.

In time, she forgave me.

I received a photograph of her sitting at her dining room table by candle light.

She wore a beautiful gown, and the table was set for two.

On my birthday that year, there was a photo of the cake she had baked for me.

She sent a picture of herself standing in front of a Victorian house with an elderly couple, her parents.

She dressed up as a fairy princess for Halloween and as one of Santa's helpers for Christmas.

I was offered a promotion at work, but I had to turn it down.

It would have meant a transfer to another city and a change of address.

In this morning's photo, she sits at her dressing table in a faded flannel nightshirt, removing her make-up.

I can see the camera and tripod in her mirror.

I can also see that there is a streak of gray in her hair.

Just yesterday morning, I noticed that I also have a few strands of gray at the temples.

We are growing older together. □

SHARYN NOVEMBER

MESSAGE FOR MY BROTHER

Younger, you spied, wanting to uncover
the body's language: arms
that unknowingly cross-hatch chest,
barring it shut; the head tilted slightly
a wary checkmark. And so, observing me on my bed
through small telescope, you waited
until my legs in repose
assumed your manual's "receptive position"—stacked curves
that stiffened as you barged in.

Without pause, my body
pinned you to the floor, hands prodding out
bodily phrenology. Like red pencil, your screams
circled each weakest part: knees, elbows, the flexible joints
"surely bringing you to danger," I predicted
as you lay stoic, almost too adaptable. Pale hyphen,
your compressed lips
marked the silent punctuation—

Ten years later. At the kitchen table, my tea releases
a vertical code of steam
that momentarily wavers. You stand behind me.
Then, sitting opposite, I remember
the Thomas Eakins photograph of a man
turned away, long angles; listening through his silence,
a woman in silhouette. She's opened back
like a funnel into herself. All those words
their bodies hold back! The breath I take now
will emerge as speech. Uncrossing my legs
under the table, almost unbarred, I begin.

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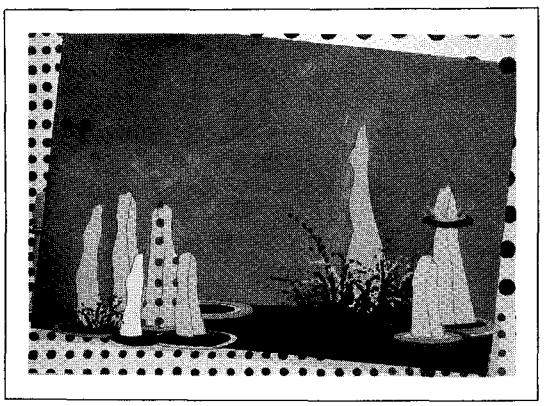
THE ICE TREE

KAREN ALPHA



The weekend before Christmas, the traditional weekend, one sweet whole day of which was ceremonially reserved for ritual tree cutting, Benjamin Sing, age eight, was felled into bed with the Russian flu. The coming day of rejoicing, its big red *25* marching at the head of the last line on the calendar, was itself to fall on a Sunday, and as it approached and Benjamin continued wheezing and coughing up gunk it looked as though the tree would have to be got this year for once without him.

What the hell, said Marianna, so we don't go out in the woods and catch frostbite this year; how about a nice little fat tree from the lot down at the fire hall? She got in the car quickly to go pick one up and be done with it, determined to cover up all their disappointment by moving fast, without fuss, like an innoculation: band-aid on and out the door before you have time to say ouch at the needle.

But except for a stack of greens and one spindly needley disaster that not even a close and pointed reading of "The Smallest Fir Tree" could transform into tinseled beauty for Ben for whom it all was, the lot was empty. She drove to a couple of other sites she knew of—they were deserted; if in fact anyone had ever sold Christmas trees there, there was no trace.

It was Wednesday morning. She drove home and called Michael at the office and told him to be sure and get home early for lunch because they were going out in the woods to cut a tree.

It was a beautiful tree. Tall and narrow and evenly thick-branched, not one of those unruly bushy things that can spread across half the floor tripping guests and foiling efforts to lay out the Lionel. The tree rose like an arrow, like a sheath of arrows glinting to the sky. It was only after they'd cut it and it had crunched to the ground that they realized it was covered with ice.

There had been snow over the weekend, in fact there had been a lot of snow already, early in the winter. Except for that one-day thaw, was it Monday? And then the cold had snapped everything shut like a deep freeze and crusted it over besides.

Standing on top of the snow crust in a field of frozen trees in the bone-cracking cold, Michael, in a business suit and overcoat, and Marianna, in every insulated garment she owned, found they could not lift the tree. They could scarcely drag it, at least a hundred pounds of ice clung to its branches, they pulled and strained and jockeyed it a few feet at a time. Michael's eyes bulged in disbelief. It was like pulling a loaded sledge, a runnerless dead weight. The temptation was simply to leave it and go find another but that seemed too much like casual murder and so they heaved it forward in short adrenal spurts until they reached the car, and then gasping in the clouds of their own white breath, hurrying—at the lateness of the hour, and of the date, and at Ben at home alone all this time—rolled it up on the car roof and drove home with it hardly anchored, for not even the wind was strong enough to blow it off.

It was in fact the wind that had frozen the tree in its hilltop field, had solidified its branches into separate cylindrical ice tubes, had preserved each needley branch with thick clear icy insulation so that they drooped with their own weight, and glittered in the afternoon sun like blown glass. In the sun it would melt, and so they leaned it against the south lee of the house to thaw.

On Thursday Marianna came out with a broom and brushed off what loose snow lay on its top branches, but probably because of the continuing remarkable low temperature, the ice remained. She went in and found a paint store yardstick and used it to tap the branches in hopes the ice would crumble and fall away, sharp taps with the wooden stick edge. It barely chipped. The branches toward the sun seemed somewhat softened in contrast to those touching the house—its warmth apparently not penetrating the clapboard, its protection not sufficient to shelter out the cold, the reflection of its white no match for the deep cold ice. Marianna pulled the tree upright and turned it half a revolution before settling it gingerly back against the house. Her bare fingers had numbed already in the cold.

On Friday there was no sun; the temperature hovered near zero and the wind picked up. Every hour Marianna came out with the yardstick and tapped at the ice, increasingly sharper taps, small staccato blows meant to shatter the glassy coat but not travel through it to the thin branches—already seemingly bent beyond endurance by their pendulous ice ends. Her whacks and raps had their effect; some of the thick cylinders cracked and split, showering little crystals down on her sleeves and leaving jagged pieces hanging from the tree twigs like chandelier drops. But the ice wouldn't fall away cleanly; it clung to the rough underbark, hanging onto the needles, twisting them, tearing them out. The needles held the ice like fish hooks, like fish hooks embedded in the transparent frozen gullet of a cod, stiff and dead and no longer feeling

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their points. Except it was the needles that were alive and caught in the ice—but not alive and warm enough to slip free—and inescapably joined with it into the one thing.

Marianna came out all afternoon to strike at the tree with her long ruler, walking around it, stretching up toward the inaccessible reaches of its piney top, turning it a bit each time to change the exposure. Although neither the house nor the day contributed any warmth toward its melting; the revolving tree merely revealed new unstruck ice. Occasionally, too, the fresh manila color of newly snapped twigs, the black-green of bruised needles.

By late afternoon a state of small panic had settled into Marianna's mind: the tree must go up tomorrow. Her thwacks at it grew less guarded, less checked at the follow-through. The ice must go, beyond any doubt she must vanquish it, and now, today. Like a sword she wielded the yardstick: strike and parry, thrust! From every angle—dodging the branches as they recoiled, as they reached out to grapple—slicing at the ice. The battle had reached fever pitch when, with a crack that sent her jumping backward in surprise and a sudden shock along her arm that made her shout oh! in quick fright, the yardstick split. In a long diagonal splintered jag. From about twenty to twenty-four inches, the short end clattering off the top panes of the living rom window and landing in a snow burdened bush some ten yards distant.

Frozen in defense, Marianna recovered with the long end still in her hand, and after inspecting its spiky tip a minute went back over to the tree and jabbed some more, although a lot more nonchalantly, and gently, than before. Finally, feeling pretty foolish at standing out in the cold poking at her Christmas tree with the pointy end of a broken paint store yardstick, she left it and went indoors. The streetlights had come on. The aroma of a neglected dinner seeped through the house and made her run for the kitchen. The tree glazed over, a skin of ice twinkling in the failing light.

On Saturday they brought it in where it melted at last just inside the front door on the hall carpet. They set it up there in a stand and fed it the sugar water/embalming fluid invention that is supposed to make Christmas trees and cut flowers near-immortal, and then it began slowly and complacently to drip. It dripped all day forming large pools in the dry cleaner's plastic garment bags that were patchworked on the carpet as catch basins. First it became instantly wet all over, and then the smaller ice crystals grew shiny and round and slippery as frog eggs, and dropped. Soon they all began dropping, cascading down through the branches like disappearing jewels bound for certain oblivion in the puddles. The larger chunks splashed. The tiny ones dissolved in a magical transitory plummet, like a circus high-diver who springs off the platform and disappears on the way down into some other inexplicable form, for there is only water in the tank and no one could see just when the change took place.

Benjamin sat on the stairs throughout, watching, an audience of one, barely aware of Marianna and Michael passing through with the boxes of lights and balls and tinselled somethings.

Presently it was over. Like blanket-bounced clowns the puddles were picked up in their plastic film and heaved out the front door where they instantly formed sheets of ice on the shoveled walk. The tree stretched its branches up and fuzzed out its needles, looking sublime. Marianna came with the garden pruners to snip it into conical perfection. And all day whenever she neared the tree a cool draught breezed over her as if someone had opened an outside door or was breathing cold breath into the house. The cold wet air radiating from the tree brushed against her face as she walked through the hall and chilled her front as she circled, commencing the decoration. Reaching her hand into the thick branches she felt a zone of fresh wet life inside the dry air of her house and said *Hello tree* as if it were the foreign representative of its country, come to stay awhile.

On Sunday it was Christmas.

But this was not the end of the story of the ice tree. The crypt-like coolness it imparted to her house quickly evaporated in favor of a spreading agreeable pine needle smell that invaded parts of the living room and slipped upstairs into a bedroom when someone opened the front door. In bauble-lit brilliance the spruce stood through the holiday, past New Year's and all the twelve days, their attendant celebrations, guests, society. It stood at the entrance to the house looking very warm—strangely, as that was not its history—in green greeting to all who came in and again as they left, and seemed satisfied to perform this service for as long as anyone permitted, which lasted well beyond the season. Prolonging the ancient winter holiday to new lengths. It was not until the last days of January that the light and bulb and tinselled something boxes returned and the tree was quickly stripped and laid, still green, out on the curb.

That night it snowed. It didn't just snow, it snowed as though it forgot how to stop snowing. It snowed as if it expressly meant to snow eternally, to halt school and business, smother traffic, suspend deliveries, pickups, mail, adjourn the tree collection, and collapse several outlying barn roofs. It snowed that night and all the next day, effectively blanketing the town, cutting it off at the arterial. So thick that often it was a wall of white outside the windows, and anyone who stepped outside suddenly reappeared inches taller with mounds of white on their heads and shoulders. Dogs disappeared up to the ears. No one could slog more than a few feet in any direction. It was an unannounced holiday, and the overall mood was jolly.

Michael, out shoveling during a break in the storm, the eye of the blizzard or some such thing, discovered the tree nearly buried already and about to be plowed under. He pulled it out and stuck the great tree upright in the snowbank so he could use its space to pile his shovelfulls, and when the walk was finally cleared to passability and the street plowed down and sanded the tree stood between them up to its hips in snowbank, looking alive.

It snowed a lot that winter. The snowbank became a tall wall entombing the tree and with it a nearby maple sapling and along the way a young honey locust. All buried dead or alive, as they were, in the snow crust. Their tops demarking the summit. The tree withstood.

It was used, like any tree, by birds, dogs, children.

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Marianna and Ben, out sledding one evening, walked home atop the snow wall until they reached the tree. They burrowed down on the top soft snow in its shelter and lay there warm. Watching the stars. Thinking how it would be to sleep outside in winter.

Marianna grew used to the tree. It seemed as though it had always grown there. Sometimes she thought about its cut stem that was frozen down in the snow, and then she could see it and it seemed she saw small white roots appear at the bark edge, lengthening into a radius, growing fat, finally diving for the earth. As winter waned and the tree stood, it seemed only natural that all this was taking place under the snow—and that when it melted the tree would remain, rooted, held sturdy of itself and not in roots of ice. She would not have been the least surprised had this occurred.

When all the snow on the ground had melted and the grass was beginning to color again, the big spruce stood green and branchy. Its snowbank was the last to go. It was well into April when the tree crashed down—still hanging on to its needles, not very bleached from the months of sun—and two days before daffodils bloomed under bushes a few feet away.

Later, when Marianna thought about the ice tree, she remembered that in the beginning it had amused her to be caught in what seemed to be a small classic struggle with nature, or its emissary. She had felt helpless against it, and even when she'd had her way she still felt helpless. Especially with time. As its staying power became evident. The tree began to take on a certain stature that was at the same time human and cruel. It seemed to be telling her something, something about living and dying and how they can sometimes be the same thing: what it can be like to live in the forest, what it can be like to die in the house, and what it can be like to live without the ice. □

ROGER MITCHELL

VARIATIONS

I

I come back carrying a past
that happened here, but not to me,
and not to any of those like me
who borrowed a piece of the air here,
and when they left, left building dreams
of leaving, and of coming back.

I've wanted to come back smiling,
full of teeth. I've wanted to undo
the frightened boy I knew then,
his foolish cruelties and hate.
I've wanted what I've wanted so,
I hear faint cheering in my dreams.

A boy remembers always what
he'd rather not. A boy spends years
saying the thing he should have said,
but didn't, to the girl who turned
and left him standing in a lot.
She leaves him standing in a lot,

and after twenty years or so,
he gets it right, the boy, standing
in the empty lot in the head
of the grown man, stammering toward
faint light, blowing out the dark.

II

OK, there was no boy standing
in an empty lot. I saw it
in a movie, a bad B flick
in a small town where the popcorn
stank of rancid fat. And the girl,
she was the biggest lie of all.

All right, there was a girl. Her name
was Phoebe. I forget her name.
The bit about the B movie
I made up. It seemed the right place
to learn a bad habit you can't
ever seem to break your mind of.

I was young, though. Do you buy that?
And I stayed young, for a long time.
I married the girl. Jane, I think.
We ate popcorn for seven years,
and watched a bland double feature
that kept on ending till the end.

OK, I give up. I surrender.
Nothing remotely resembling
anything I've said ever was.
I came into the world naked
and alone. After that, things blur.
I fall into a ditch of facts.

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FATES WORSE THAN DEATH

Kurt Vonnegut
Lecture at St. John the Divine, NYC
23 May 1982

Good morning,
This is a pretty small church, but I guess I have to start somewhere.

Actually, this is not my main line of work. Preaching in Cathedrals is just a hobby. I make up stories for a living. I get my ideas from dreams.

The wildest dream I have had so far is about *The New Yorker Magazine.* In this dream, the magazine has published a three-part essay by Jonathan Schell which proves that life on Earth is about to end. I am supposed to go to the largest Gothic cathedral in the world, where all the people are waiting, and say something wonderful—right before a hydrogen bomb is dropped on the Empire State Building.

People as far away as Bridgeport will die instantly.

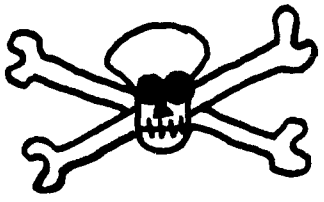
Here is how I interpret the dream: I consider myself an important writer, and I think *The New Yorker* should be ashamed that it has never published me.

I will speak today about the worst imaginable consequences of doing without hydrogen bombs. This should be a relief. I am sure you are sick and tired of hearing how all living things sizzle and pop inside a radioactive fireball. We have known that for more than a third of this century—ever since we dropped an atom bomb on the yellow people of Hiroshima. *They* certainly sizzled and popped.

After all is said and done, what was that sizzling and popping, despite the brilliant technology which caused it, but our old friend death? Let us not forget that Saint Joan of Arc was made to sizzle and pop in old times with nothing more than firewood. She wound up dead. The people of Hiroshima wound up dead. Dead is dead.

Scientists, for all their creativity, will never discover a method for making people deader than dead. So if some of you are worried about being hydrogen-bombed, you are merely fearing death. There is nothing new in that. If there weren't any hydrogen bombs, death would still be after you. And what is death but an absence of life? That's all it is. That is all it ever can be.

Death is nothing. What is all this fuss about?



Let us "up the ante," as gamblers say. Let us talk about fates worse than death. When the Reverend Jim Jones saw that his followers in Guyana were facing fates worse than death, he gave them Kool-Aid laced with cyanide. If our government sees that we are facing fates worse than death, it will shower our enemies with hydrogen bombs, and then we will be showered in turn. There will be plenty of Kool-Aid for everyone, in a manner of speaking, when the right time comes.

What will the right time look like?

I will not waste your time with trivial fates, which are only marginally worse than death. Suppose we were conquered by an enemy, for example, who didn't understand our wonderful economic system, and so Braniff Airlines and International Harvester and so on all went bust, and millions of Americans who wanted to work couldn't find any jobs anywhere. Or suppose we were conquered by an enemy who was too cheap to take good care of our children and old people. Or suppose we were conquered by an enemy who wouldn't spend money on anything but weapons for World War Three. These are all tribulations we could live with, if we had to—although God forbid.

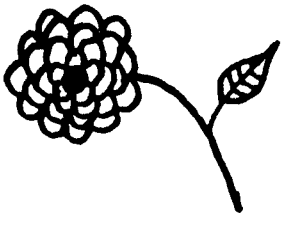
But suppose we foolishly got rid of our nuclear weapons, our Kool-Aid, and an enemy came over here and crucified us. Crucifixion was the most painful thing which the ancient Romans ever found to do to anyone. They knew as much about pain as we do about genocide. They sometimes crucified hundreds of people at one time. That is what they did to all the survivors of the army of Spartacus, which was composed mostly of escaped slaves. They crucified them all. There were several miles of crosses.

If we were up on crosses, with nails through our feet and hands, wouldn't we wish that we still had hydrogen bombs, so that life could be ended everywhere? Absolutely.

We know of one person who was crucified in olden times, who was supposedly as capable as we or the Russians are of ending life everywhere. But he chose to endure agony instead. All he said was, "Forgive them, Father—they know not what they do."

He let life go on, as awful as it was for him, because here we are, aren't we?

But he was a special case. It is unfair to use Jesus Christ as an exemplar of how much pain and humiliation we ordinary human beings should put up with before calling for the end of everything.



I don't believe that we *are* about to be crucified. No potential enemy we now face has anywhere near enough carpenters. Not even the Pentagon at budget time has mentioned cruci-

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fixion. I am sorry to have to put that idea into their heads. I will have only myself to blame if, a year from now, the Joint Chiefs of Staff testify under oath that we are on the brink of being crucified.

But what if they said, instead, that we would be enslaved if we did not appropriate enough money for weaponry? That could be true. Despite our world-wide reputation for sloppy workmanship, wouldn't some enemy get a kick out of forcing us into involuntary servitude, buying and selling us like so many household appliances or farm machines or inflatable erotic toys?

And slavery would surely be a fate worse than death. We can agree on that, I'm sure. We should send a message to the Pentagon: "If Americans are about to become enslaved, it is Kool-Aid Time."

They will know what we mean.

Of course, at Kool-Aid time all higher forms of life on Earth, not just us and our enemies, will be killed. Even those beautiful and fearless and utterly stupid sea birds, the blue-footed boobies of the Galapagos Islands, will die, because we object to slavery.

I have seen those birds, by the way—up close. I could have unscrewed their heads, if I wanted to. I made a trip to the Galapagos Islands two months ago—in the company of, among other people, Paul Moore, the bishop of this very cathedral.

That is the sort of company I keep these days—everything from bishops to blue-footed boobies. I have never seen a human slave, though. But my four great-grandfathers saw slaves. When they came to this country in search of justice and opportunity, there were millions of Americans who were slaves.

The equation which links a strong defense posture to not being enslaved is laid down in that stirring fight song, much heard lately, "Rule Britannia." I will sing the equation:

"Rule Britannia, Britannia rule the waves—"

That, of course, is a poetic demand for a navy second to none. The next line explains why it is essential to have a navy that good:

"Britons never, never, never shall be slaves."

It may surprise some of you to learn what an old equation that is. The Scottish poet who wrote it, James Thomson, died in 1748—one quarter of a century before there was such a country as the United States of America. Thomson promised Britons that they would never be slaves at a time when the enslavement of persons with inferior weaponry was a respectable industry. Plenty of people were going to be slaves, and it would serve them right, too—but Britons would not be among them.

So that isn't really a very nice song. It is about not being humiliated, which is all right. But it is also about humiliating others, which is not a moral thing to do. The humiliation of others should never be a national goal.

There is one poet who should have been ashamed of himself.

If the Soviet Union came over here and enslaved us, it wouldn't be the first time Americans were slaves. If we conquered the Russians and enslaved them, it wouldn't be the first time Russians were slaves.

And the last time Americans were slaves, and the last time Russians were slaves, they displayed astonishing spiritual strengths and resourcefulness. They were good at loving one another. They trusted God. They discovered in the simplest, most natural satisfactions, reasons to be glad to be alive. They were able to believe that better days were coming in the sweet by-and-by. And here is a fascinating statistic: they committed suicide less often than their masters did.

So Americans and Russians can both stand slavery, if they have to—and still want life to go on and on.

Could it be that slavery *isn't* a fate worse than death? After all, people are tough, you know? Maybe we shouldn't send that message to the Pentagon—about slavery and Kool-Aid time.

But suppose enemies came ashore in great numbers, because we lacked the means to stop them, and they pushed us out of our homes and off our ancestral lands, and into swamps and deserts. Suppose that they even tried to destroy our religion, telling us that our Great God Jehovah, or whatever we wanted to call Him, was as ridiculous as a piece of junk jewelry.

Again: that is a wringer millions of Americans have already been through—or are still going through. It is another catastrophe which Americans can endure, if they have to—and still, miraculously, maintain some measure of dignity, or self-respect.

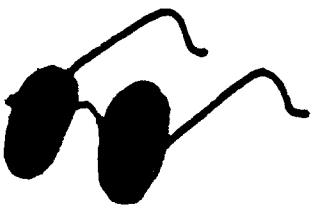
As bad as life is for our Indians, they still like it better than death.

So I haven't had much luck, have I, in identifying fates worse than death. Crucifixion is the only clear winner so far, and we aren't about to be crucified. We aren't about to be enslaved, either—to be treated as white Americans used to treat black Americans. And no potential enemy that I have heard of wants to come over here to treat all of us the way we still treat American Indians.

What other fates worse than death could I name? Life without petroleum?

In melodramas of a century ago, a female's loss of virginity outside of holy wedlock was sometimes spoken of as a fate worse than death. I hope that isn't what the Pentagon or the Kremlin has in mind—but you never know.

I would rather die for virginity than for petroleum, I think. It's more literary, somehow.



I may be blinding myself to the racist aspects of hydrogen bombs, whose only function is to end everything. Perhaps there are tribulations which

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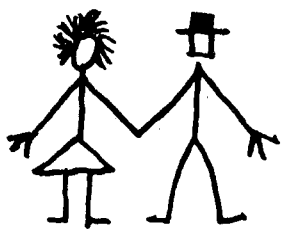
white people should not be asked to tolerate. But the Russian slaves were white. The supposedly unenslavable Britons were enslaved by the Romans. Even proud Britons, if they were enslaved now, would have to say, "Here we go again." Armenians and Jews have certainly been treated hideously in modern as well as ancient times—and they have still wanted life to go on and on and on. About a third of our own white people were robbed and ruined and scorned after our Civil War. They still wanted life to go on and on and on.



Have there ever been large numbers of human beings of any sort who have not, despite everything, done everything they could to keep life going on and on and on?

Soldiers.

'Death before Dishonor' was the motto of several military formations during the Civil War—on both sides. It may be the motto of the Eighty-second Airborne Division right now. A motto like that made a certain amount of sense, I suppose, when military death was what happened to the soldier on the right or the left of you—or in front of you—or in back of you. But military death now can easily mean the death of everything, including, as I have already said, the blue-footed boobies of the Galapagos Islands.

The webbed feet of those birds really are the brightest blue, by the way. When two blue-footed boobies begin a courtship, they show each other what beautiful, bright blue feet they have.

If you go to the Galapagos Islands, and see all the strange creatures, you are bound to think what Charles Darwin thought when he went there: How much time Nature has in which to accomplish simply anything. If we desolate this planet, Nature can get life going again. All it takes is a few million years or so, the wink of an eye to Nature.

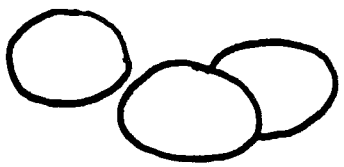
Only humankind is running out of time.

My guess is that we will not disarm, even though we should, and that we really will blow up everything by and by. History shows that human beings are vicious enough to commit every imaginable atrocity, including the construction of factories whose only purpose was to kill people and burn them up.

It may be that we were put here on Earth to blow the place to smithereens. We may be Nature's way of creating new galaxies. We may be programmed to improve and improve our weapons, and to believe that death is better than dishonor.

And then, one day, as disarmament rallies are being held all over the planet, *ka-blooey!* A new Milky Way is born.

Perhaps we should be adoring instead of loathing our hydrogen bombs. They could be the eggs for new galaxies.



What can save us? Divine intervention, certainly—and this is the place to ask for it. We might pray to be rescued from our inventiveness, just as the dinosaurs may have prayed to be rescued from their size.

But the inventiveness which we so regret now may also be giving us, along with the rockets and warheads, the means to achieve what has hitherto been an impossibility, the unity of mankind. I am talking mainly about television sets.

Even in my own lifetime, it used to be necessary for a young soldier to get into fighting before he became disillusioned about war. His parents back home were equally ignorant, and believed him to be slaying monsters. But now, thanks to modern communications, the people of every industrialized nation are nauseated by war by the time they are ten years old. America's first generation of television viewers has gone to war and come home again—and we have never seen veterans like them before.

What makes the Vietnam veterans so somehow spooky? We could almost describe them as being 'unwholesomely mature.' They have *never* had illusions about war. They are the first soldiers in history who knew even in childhood, from having heard and seen so many pictures of actual and restaged battles, that war is meaningless butchery of ordinary people like themselves.

It used to be that veterans could shock their parents when they came home, as Ernest Hemingway did, by announcing that everything about war was repulsive and stupid and dehumanizing. But the parents of our Vietnam veterans were disillusioned about war, too, many of them having seen it first hand, before their children ever went overseas. Thanks to modern communications, Americans of all ages were dead sick of war even before we went into Vietnam.

Thanks to modern communications, the poor, unlucky young people from the Soviet Union, now killing and dying in Afghanistan, were dead sick of war before they ever got there.

Thanks to modern communications, the same must be true of the poor, unlucky young people from Argentina and Great Britain, now killing and dying in the Falkland Islands. *The New York Post* calls them 'Argies' and 'Brits.' Thanks to modern communications, we know that they are a good deal more marvelous and complicated than that, and that what is happening to them down there, on the rim of the Antarctic, is a lot more horrible and shameful than a soccer match.

When I was a boy it was unusual for an American, or a person of any nationality, for that matter, to know much about foreigners. Those who did were specialists—diplomats, explorers, journalists, anthropologists. And they usually knew a lot about just a few groups of foreigners, Eskimos, maybe, or Arabs, or what have

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you. To them, as to the schoolchildren of Indianapolis, large areas of the globe were *terra incognita*.

Now look what has happened. Thanks to modern communications, we have seen sights and heard sounds from virtually every square mile of the land mass on this planet. Millions of us have actually visited more exotic places than had many explorers during my childhood. Many of you have been to Timbuktu. Many of you have been to Katmandu. My dentist just got home from Fiji. He told me all about Fiji. If he had taken his fingers out of my mouth, I would have told him about the Galapagos Islands.

So we now know for *certain* that there are no potential human enemies anywhere who are anything but human beings almost exactly like ourselves. They need food. How amazing. They love their children. How amazing. They obey their leaders. How amazing. They think like their neighbors. How amazing.

Thanks to modern communications, we now have something we never had before: reason to mourn deeply the death or wounding of any human being on any side in any war.

It was because of rotten communications, of malicious, racist ignorance that we were able to celebrate the killing of almost all the inhabitants in Hiroshima, Japan, thirty-seven years ago. We thought they were vermin. They thought we were vermin. They would have clapped their little yellow hands with glee, and grinned with their crooked buck teeth, if they could have incinerated everybody in Kansas City, say.

Thanks to how much the people of the world now know about all the other people of the world, the fun of killing enemies has lost its zing. It has so lost its zing that no sane citizen of the Soviet Union, if we were to go to war with that society, would feel anything but horror if his country were to kill practically everybody in New York and Chicago and San Francisco. Killing enemies has so lost its zing, that no sane citizen of the United States would feel anything but horror if our country were to kill practically everybody in Moscow and Leningrad and Kiev.

Or in Nagasaki, Japan, for that matter.

We have often heard it said that people would have to change, or we would go on having world wars. I bring you good news this morning: people have changed.

We aren't so ignorant and bloodthirsty any more.

I told you a crazy dream I had—about *The New Yorker Magazine* and this cathedral. I will tell you a sane dream now.

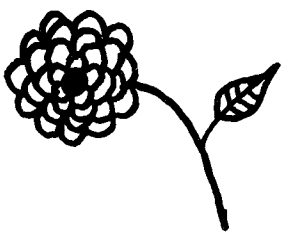
I dreamed last night of our descendants a thousand years from now, which is to say all of humanity. If you are at all into reproduction, as was the Emperor Charlemagne, you can pick up an awful lot of relatives in a thousand years. Every person in this cathedral who has a drop of white blood, is a descendant of Charlemagne.

A thousand years from now, if there are still human beings on Earth, every one of those human beings will be descended from us—and from everyone who has chosen to reproduce.

In my dream, our descendants are numerous. Some of them are rich, some are poor, some are likeable, some are insufferable.

I ask them how humanity, against all odds, managed to keep going for another millennium. They tell me that they and their ancestors did it by preferring life over death for themselves and others at every opportunity, even at the expense of being dishonored. They endured all sorts of insults and humiliations and disappointments without committing either suicide or murder. They are also the people who do the insulting and humiliating and disappointing.

I endear myself to them by suggesting a motto they might like to put on their belt buckles or tee-shirts or whatever. They aren't all hippies, by the way. They aren't all Americans, either. They aren't even all white people.



I give them a quotation from that great 19th century moralist and robber baron, Jim Fisk, who may have contributed money to this cathedral.

Jim Fisk uttered his famous words after a particularly disgraceful episode having to do with the Erie Railroad. Fisk himself had no choice but to find himself contemptible. He thought this over, and then he shrugged and said what we all must learn to say, if we want to go on living much longer:

"Nothing is lost save honor."

I thank you for your attention.

—*Kurt Vonnegut*

"Fates Worse Than Death" has already appeared in print in more than one circular, brochure, and pamphlet. At the insistence of its author, it is available to anyone who wishes to reprint it, free and without the necessity of application for legal permissions. NAR readers should therefore feel free to photocopy the preceding four pages for circulation to friends, congressional delegations, and the administrations of appropriate governments whether foreign or domestic. The pen-and-ink drawings are, of course, by Mr. Vonnegut himself.

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The Electric Prince

When I first saw the Prince he was doing his best to wrench his head off. He had one hand on either side of his face, and was tugging and jerking and twisting, as though once he found the right position his head would suddenly disconnect from his neck and end up in his hands. He seemed pretty sure what he'd do with it next, but oblivious to the impracticality of his methods. The two male aides with him were trying to loosen his hands from his cheeks.

I stood in the doorway with Kohlman.

"What do you mean, a Prince?" I said.

"He *is*," Kohlman said. Kohlman, one of my fellow Residents, had been on call the night before. and had the logey, unshaven look and the slurred voice of a man whose judgment may not be entirely reliable.

"Is what?" I said.

"A real Prince. At first I thought it was a grandiose delusion—I had him pegged for a manic . . . but there were people from the Embassy calling and a Baroness brought him in. She'd been trying to manage him at home . . . doesn't believe in psychiatrists—but found him about to take all the pills in her medicine cabinet . . . so she called . . ."

The Prince was a bulky, unshaven man in a tweed jacket which was torn in the armpits, and an untucked and none-too-clean white shirt, and he did a pretty good job of shaking off Jack and Eddie, the aides, who had to keep grabbing his forearms. Kohlman was saying something about the Emergency Room and neurologists and medical clearance.

"Why are you telling me this?" I said. I had drifted onto the unit only because shock treatments—June was my month to do them—had been delayed this morning, the anesthesiologist having been called to the main hospital for an emergency; I had passed Kohlman on the way to my office, and merely stopped to say hello.

"He's yours," Kohlman said. "You're up for a new patient, right?"

"Oh, *shit*," I said. Then I woke up. "What's going on? He'll hurt himself. How come he's not in restraints?"

"He's a Prince," Kohlman said.

"So?" I said. Kohlman had the habit, I had learned after a year on a psychiatric floor with him, of preferring philosophy over action, of reveling in observation and ethical musings. He could always find reason to delay. On the other hand, of course, Kohlman probably had a fairly complete catalogue of my deficiencies too.

"I suppose you're right," he said. "He has been doing this most of the night."

"How about some medication?"

"He refuses."

"What do you say we get some aides and a nurse with IM Haldol and a camisole and see what we can do," I said. Kohlman was wobbling. "Did you sleep?"

"No . . . three admissions . . . a heart failure on Five . . ."

I went for the nursing station, leaving him behind.

Within ten minutes we had the Prince in a brand new white canvas brass-buckled camisole—a straitjacket—with his arms crossed over his chest, and connected to the bedframe by rolled bedsheets and adhesive tape. Even after a hefty shot the Prince was doing his best to flip over the bed. But things were under control. The extra aides had dispersed, the nurse had gone back to her station, and the only one left was Eddie, in a chair, with a copy of *Glamour* on his lap.

"So what is he—agitated depression?" I said.

"I think so," Kohlman said.

"And the treatment plan? We going to shock him?"

"Oh," said Kohlman, "I tried to talk them into it last night . . . the Baroness and the other people . . . they won't even *listen* to the idea. They think he should have therapy."

"*Therapy*?"

"Yeah, therapy," he said. "But they'll be back this afternoon."

"Great," I said. "I always did well with royalty."

"So how many do we have today?"

I was the last one to the ECT Suite that morning—the Head Nurse had tangled me up in Rounds over the issue of whether Miss Cutler, my borderline, could handle an unaccompanied pass to Bloomingdale's, or whether she would just come back with razor blades again—and by the time I arrived here, the ECT nurse had gotten the first patient on the table, and the anesthesiologist, Dr. Rickey, in his crumpled whites, was growling over his suitcase of vials, tubes, syringes, airways and facemasks, aggressively squirting poisonous drugs in my general direction, on the pretext of getting air bubbles out of his syringes.

"Six," said the ECT nurse. Rickey and I always called her 'ECT Mary' because that was how she answered the phone. "Mrs. English ate graham crackers again."

"Too bad," I said. "She needs those treatments. Hello, Mrs. Goldman."

"Hello, doctor." The woman on the table, Mrs. Goldman, was wrinkled and arthritic, with a big square forehead on which it was easy to get the electrodes to stay. Before we began the treatments she had decided all water was "poison ink" and all food was "poison dirt" and had decided on starvation as the best way out.

"How are you feeling?"

"Oh . . . better."

"You're eating?"

"Some. I had a very nice dinner last night . . ."

"How's your sleep?"

"Much better, doctor."

"Good." While talking I slipped the tourniquet around her arm, rubbed soft old flesh with an alcohol pad, and wriggled a butterfly needle into the vein at the bend of the elbow, securing it with tape. Just like being an Intern again. Mrs. Goldman made a slight whimper but otherwise lay still. Across from me ECT Mary was checking her pulse and blood pressure, and at her head Dr. Rickey, having finished his squirting, now had a black facemask in his hands, which he flexed to soften it, then

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attached to the ventilator. He puffed it a few times.

"Ready," I said.

"Okay." He leaned forward over Mrs. Goldman, attaching the first syringe to the butterfly, and pushed the medicine. In a few seconds the old lady's eyelids slipped down across her pupils. He took another syringe—the first contained sodium pentothal, this one Succinylcholine, a neuromuscular junction blocking agent, and slowly pushed its contents in; within a few seconds she had stopped breathing. He took the black facemask, put a few fingers under her chin and lifted her head back to open the airway, then puffed up her chest with air.

The Succ circulated through her. You could see it, starting at the face and moving down, fluttering her muscles in bursts, leaving them flaccid.

"It's in her calves," I said. Fluttering contractions and releases, a dysphonic, silent wave as blood slowly progressed down her old legs. Finally you could see it arrive at the bottoms of her feet, shaking rivulets that flowed up to her toes, which trembled for a moment, then went. "She's ready."

ECT Mary moved around Rickey, in her hands a big clamp with the electrodes attached; it led to the machine, the old one, a black box that looked like it belonged to a TV repairman. It rested on top of the sleek new machine, which had buffed aluminum dials and the capability for recording EEG and EKG and for delivering 'unilateral stimulus' and which, unfortunately, had been broken for months—the repairman hadn't shown up. Mary smeared white conducting cream onto the calipers and set them against the old lady's boxy temples.

When I pushed the button nothing happened.

"Should I go again?"

"Wait," Mary said.

Down at her feet you could see slight tremors, and then her toes began pointing down, forced by polar current away from her body.

"She's in."

"It's a good one."

We waited. Rickey breathed her, Mary took vital signs; I did nothing until she came out of it and started breathing on her own; then I took her chart and sat down to write my note.

ECT #5
Pre VS: VS: BP 160/80 P 90
Post VS: VS: BP P
BP P

Meds: Atropine 0.4 mg IM
Pentothal mg IV
Succinylcholine mg IV

Tx 160 v. × 0.75 sec
Bilateral response. Patient had a well-modified tonic clonic seizure without complications.

"How much did she get?"

"One forty and sixty," Rickey said.

I wrote numbers in the blank spaces and signed my name. Mrs. Goldman rolled on her side. Mary put the siderails up.

I opened my cup of coffee and drank. In a few minutes, when she was breathing properly, we'd draw the curtain around her and the next patient would come in. Then the same routine, the IV, the medications, the black facemask, the watching for fasciculations. Pushing the button. The seizure. Sometimes so well-modified as to be invisible, sometimes not. I hated it. It was an easy way to spend the morning, true, but the idea of shocking the brain—even though it so clearly worked, I didn't like it. Barbaric, archaic—was that it? I couldn't really say why I hated so much being here. I knew every justification for ECT: that it worked fast, that for someone with a malignant, intense depression it was humane and effective, that it had fewer side-effects than the medications and so was good for the old and the sick. I knew it all. The history, the neurobiology. Everything. But still I hated it, this month of what Rickey called 'bake and shake.' Rickey seemed to like it though—putting people under, breathing them.

I wondered how I'd get the Prince to agree. We'd gone over him in Morning Rounds, Dr. Brauett, our Unit Chief, talking about major affective disorder, depressed, with psychotic features, and we'd debated phenomenology, mood congruency or incongruency of symptoms, whether it was more likely unipolar or bipolar illness—but I found myself thinking about the Prince in a different way, like a character out of Mann or Lampedusa, a nobleman in exile, subject to fits of melancholy, this time progressing to madness. His own wealth reproached him, as did his title and the elegance of his life: how could he be so miserable, he asked Kohlman, in a world that was so infinitely more miserable? He had been in hospitals in Switzerland and France and Austria for sleep cures and hydrotherapy; in New York he worked in a small foreign bank. The bank was not doing well, the Baroness said, and the Prince was held responsible, was demoted but could not quit, and became terribly depressed, shrinking from food and sleep. Two days ago he put a loaded gun to his head.

"Doctor?" ECT Mary stood before me. "You done with Mrs. Goldman's chart?"

"Sure. I . . . I just need her last vital signs."

"BP 150 over 80, P 80."

"Okay." I handed it to her; she tucked it under the corner of Mrs. Goldman's mattress, and pulled the curtain. Mr. Donovan came in.

"Mr. Donovan," said Mary. "Just bring your legs up . . . that's good . . . now turn."

I approached him. "Hello, Mr. Donovan. How're you doing today?"

"Terrible," Mr. Donovan said.

"Can Mrs. Goldman go up now?" the aide said.

"Give her another few minutes."

I picked up the rubber tourniquet, the alcohol pad, the butterfly in its little soft plastic box from which I pulled the paper seal. I wrapped the tourniquet, waited for a vein to rise. It was easy to give in to despair here, working with such unhappy, miserable people, or to become ironic and mocking, because the human creature seemed so poorly designed, inclined to fits of self-destruction—cruel, selfish, miserably pleasureless, absurd. You could shock and push pills and do therapy as much as you wanted, and what difference would it make? But *that* was absurd too, because when you looked at them individually there was usual-

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ly something you could do. A month in the hospital, half a dozen ECTs for the ones who needed it could make a difference; you'd see the urge for death disappear.

I taped the needle in.

Rickey was reading a Len Deighton book; he closed it and stuffed it in his back pocket.

"Okay, old man, you'll be asleep in a minute," he said.

And we began again.

The Baroness was waiting when I got back to the floor. She was one of those women you see only on the East Side of Manhattan and nowhere else, materializing from taxis, walking quickly down the street with small dogs and large shiny packages. She had fine, dyed blond hair and wore a shiny red leather blouse and black trousers, and her skin looked hardened and buffed, especially around her eyes and up her cheekbones, as though she was not flesh but had been cast of some light metal alloy.

"I'm awfully glad to see you," she said. "You are the Prince's doctor, is that right? I have to tell you right off that we're not the sort of people who go for psychiatry . . ."

There were two other people with her, a tall sullenly handsome man and a black-haired girl, very beautiful, in white. I led them to my office where they arranged themselves on their chairs, waiting for me to speak.

"Well?" I said.

"We don't think he's getting better here," said the Baroness.

The other two were looking around my office.

"We find it so terribly gloomy," said the girl.

"If I were here I'd get even *more* depressed," said the Baroness. "Is there another hospital he can go to? Really, he just needs some quiet, somewhere to rest. Maybe he doesn't need to be in the hospital at all . . . just a peaceful and quiet place . . ."

"Where he can pull his head off," I said.

"I beg your pardon?"

"He keeps trying to pull his head off."

"Oh, well, he doesn't mean it," said the man.

"He just needs therapy," said the girl. "Someone to talk to him, and tell him, 'Giorgi, you're really not such a bad man.' "

"Yes, *could* you do that?" said the Baroness.

"I suppose you tried it yourself," I said, pushing it back on her.

"Oh I *did*," said the Baroness. "Night and day for the past three weeks. I hardly slept. And all that time we had to have somebody staying with him—you know what he was going to do?"

"So it didn't work?"

"No, it didn't," said the man, before the Baroness, almost tearful, could tell me what he was going to do. "Obviously it didn't work at all, otherwise we wouldn't have brought him in here."

"You did the right thing," I said.

"You know what he was about to do?" The Baroness was crying. The beautiful girl held her hand.

"He knows that already, dear," said the man. "He read the other doctor's note. We're all very upset about Giorgi being in that . . . what is it, a strait-jacket. And of course we want to help him. We don't like the idea of the E-T-C . . ."

"ECT."

"Yes, the other doctor was telling me about it. Sounds terrible, really. Isn't there another possibility, a pill or something?"

And then I launched into my spiel. Kohlman must have had other things on his mind, or been tired, because in ten minutes they had abandoned their ideas about therapy, and I led them over to the Prince's room, where he lay, newly released from the camisole. Eddie was sitting by him.

"I'll be right back," I said, and left them there.

When I returned the Prince had his hands on his neck again, and the three of them were trying to coax them away.

"Do you have the certificate?" the Baroness said. "Giorgi, the doctor wants you to sign."

"Will it kill me?" the Prince said. "Will it blow my head open? Will it make me less despicable and vicious? Already I'm worthless. Why can't you let me alone to take my head off?"

"Let go of your face, Giorgi."

"Giorgi!"

He took pen and clipboard in his hands, staring at them as if they were reptiles.

"Read the certificate, Giorgi."

"We do think it will help you."

"Or blow my brains out?"

"No."

"Do I have to do this?"

"No, of course not. You can refuse. But we think . . ."

"Giorgi, *don't* turn your head that way, you may disconnect something . . . what if you become paralyzed?"

"Sign it, Giorgi, *please* . . ."

The pen hesitated, the pen and paper rose up toward his neck. Other hands brought them down. I still had to call the ECT Committee to approve emergency treatment, call anesthesia, check the EKG and chest film, get all the numbers from the lab, write a pre-ECT note, call the nursing supervisor. The pen was still quivering over the paper.

"Giorgi, *please*. He's answered all your questions, *please* sign . . ."

"I have to leave," I said.

"No! Please . . ." said the Baroness.

I walked toward the door.

"Giorgi!"

The pen sank toward the paper.

"Now write," said the Baroness. "Just sign your name, Giorgi, *please*."

"This better go fast," Rickey said. "I've got a spinal to do in OB, they just called . . . she's dilated, crowning . . ."

"It won't take long," I said. It was dark outside the ECT suite, and you could see the cabs lined up before the main hospital; the room itself was bright, sterile, polished, glowing with light.

Rickey flipped through the Prince's chart.

"Forty-four . . . hypertension . . . no other medical problems? . . . got the consent? Okay . . . chest films normal . . . labs . . ." He looked up. "Okay. So what's this Prince stuff?"

"That's what he is."

"No shit. We'll crown *him*," Rickey said.

And the gurney rolled in. The Prince was crouched forward on it, his hospital robe fallen aside, a Poseidon on wheels.

"Where is the electricity?" he said. "I want it on my neck . . . or my face, can you give me extra?"

"Just lie back. Lie back, relax. You don't want to tip over."

"Don't you want to see what's inside my neck?"

"Lie back, please."

"Why am I still alive?"

"You'll have to give me your arm," Mary said.

"I have to put a little IV in . . . give me the other one . . ."

He lay back, breathing heavily, a muscular, barrel-chested man with a hairy body; there was nothing prince-

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like about him except perhaps a certain angularity of his features, a slant to his temples, a prominence of his cheekbones that seemed familial, somehow refined and inbred.

"I am mostly homosexual too," he said suddenly.

"Now we'll be giving you some medicine that will help you sleep . . . you'll feel very tired in a moment . . ."

Rickey twisted a syringe onto the butterfly and pushed; he took another one and pushed right behind it. The Prince's eyes went vacant, his dark lids fell halfway shut.

"Now the Succ . . ."

When the moment came the calipers slid off his angled temples; ECT Mary tried to wedge them down but they kept sliding off, into the air. Rickey had to push her away to breathe the Prince, who lay flaccid, soft as the just-dead.

"Okay, try again. Hold them at an angle this time."

"I need more paste."

"No—go!"

"We may need more Succ . . . looks like he's coming out . . ."

"Hold the handle up . . . higher. Okay. Stand back. Hands off the table. Go!"

After the button he jerked on the table, biting down with a horrible grimace on the mouthpiece, his arms and legs trembling violently for half a minute, a minute, more, before they suddenly stopped.

"Okay, take it away now . . ."

ECT Mary stepped back.

"Damn," I said.

"Lousy," said Rickey.

"Not very modified, hunh?"

"He'll be okay, just a little sore . . ."

"Hope so. What's his pressure?"

"I . . . I don't know. I'll take it now."

"Go ahead."

The next morning there we were again. It was a bright, sunny and hot late-Spring morning, and if you looked out the window you'd start thinking about the beach and running in Central Park and looking at the women. We pulled the windows wide open, and because it was so still and warm put the air conditioner on full-blast too. We did the treatments fast—Mr. Donovan and Mrs. English whose graham crackers had been taken away, and a new patient, Mrs. Kahan, and then we called the deli to deliver some coffee and bagels, and then we did Mrs. Goldman. We were really hitting it, Rickey and Mary and me, getting them perfectly modified so they barely quivered, just a little curling at the toes. Then the coffee arrived, so we took a break, with Mrs. Goldman in the corner, slowly waking up, drinking our coffee and talking about summer shares in Ocean Beach and Len Deighton and which was the best terrace in the hospital to sit and get a tan and the biochemistry of depression and why you had to give them a generalized seizure in order for it to work and the earaches of Mary's two year old kid.

"What a day, hunh?" said Rickey. He sat down on the couch next to me, unwrapped a bagel from its white paper, and tore it in half. "I'll be out of here by three. That's what's nice about anesthesia. Good hours. Plus the money's excellent."

"Sounds good," I said.

"Yeah," he said. "This one resident, graduated two years ago—she just bought a big loft down in SoHo. You make a lot. You work one morning, you get a thousand or two thousand dollars. It's good. It's only interesting maybe five per cent of the time, that's the one drawback. How 'bout you guys in psych, how do you do?"

I looked at Rickey for a moment. He chewed on the bagel, washed it down with coffee. His arms were tanned almost black. He must sit on that terrace a long time to get that dark, reading thrillers and looking out at the river.

"It's pretty interesting," I said. "You find out things about people—I like that. Secrets. What they pretend to think, what they really think. You figure out why they get in trouble. You help them. But it's hard. You sit there, you really have to listen. And you feel a lot of pain."

"Well, I couldn't do that." Rickey grinned. "That's what I like about anesthesia—they talk too much, you just give them the gas."

We laughed.

"So what about the Prince, what's his problem?"

"Agitated depression. But why, I don't know. I haven't talked to him much. It's definitely biological, at least part of it . . ."

"Hey, where is the guy, anyhow?" Rickey called across to ECT Mary, who was taking Mrs. Goldman's blood pressure. "Hey there, be a good girl, call upstairs."

Mary glared, but went to the phone.

"He doesn't want to come," she said. "He says it wasn't strong enough. He wants more volts so we'll blow his head off."

"Come *on*," Rickey said.

"No, that's what he says."

"He was disappointed by the first one," I said. "He was expecting a real headache."

"Jesus!" said Rickey. "So tell him we'll give him extra and get him down here."

"Very funny," Mary said.

"That guy is nuts," said Rickey, "Jesus Christ."

"It is weird to give it to a guy like that," I said.

In a few minutes we heard yelling outside the room, and the door was pushed open and they rolled the Prince in. If it wasn't for the yelling you'd almost think he was normal, though; he'd shaved and was wearing blue silky pajamas.

"Louder, Prince," said Rickey. "They can't hear you across the street." Rickey always said you could say anything to them before the treatments because they always forgot afterward.

"Hello, Giorgi," I said, and the Prince looked at me. "Just lie back and we'll get started in a minute."

"How about plastic explosives," said the Prince. "They are very good."

"We don't have any of those here, Prince," Rickey said. "Maybe if you went back to your country you could get some. Don't you have revolutionaries there?"

"Not enough," said the Prince. "Can you kill me, please?"

"Glad to," said Rickey.

"Shut up, Rickey," I said.

"Well excuse me," Rickey said.

I put the IV in, taped it, and pulled the syringe from Rickey's hand. I had had enough of him.

The Prince groaned. His eyes dulled.

"Succ," I said. I grabbed the other syringe. "What should we give him, eighty?"

"Give the whole thing."

I pushed it.

"Let's do it right this time," I said. I watched for the ripples in his legs, his feet. "Come on Mary, get those things ready."

"All *right*," she said.

"Don't you remember?" I said. It was sliding off his slanted forehead again. "Pull your hands up. Come *on*, so it doesn't slide off. Why can't you remember that?"

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"So sorry," she said, "*Doctor.*"

"Ready?"

"Okay."

I went for the button again.

In the afternoon there was a party for us, the Residents who were leaving. It was in the lounge by the river, a bright airy room, and we stood around eating Entenmann's coffee cake and drinking New York State champagne. The Residents, six of us, were grouped at the far end of the lounge, our white coats bright with light from the river. Everyone was saying how sick they were of the inpatient unit.

"I can't wait to finish up here," Dr. Wagner was saying. "One more week."

"I hate it," said Kohlman. "All these people—their whole lives they've been working on going crazy—and we're supposed to turn them around in a month . . ."

"I can't wait for outpatients," Wagner said.

"Me neither," said Kohlman.

"I kind of like inpatient work," I said. "I mean, I hate it sometimes, but I think I'll miss it."

"What for? Come *on*," Wagner said.

"You're getting too much electricity," Kohlman said. "You're forgetting what it's like up here."

"I know what it's like."

"You like pushing meds, is that it?"

"Yeah, right," I said. "That's it."

Afterward we all slowly walked back onto the unit. After the brightness of the river lounge it seemed unutterably dingy and dark, and I noticed how stained the carpet was, how battered the woodwork, how stale the air. Right around the corner I saw the Prince. He was sitting in a chair, reading. His black hair was brushed straight back without a part, and he was wearing a blazer with an insignia on the pocket and neatly pressed tan pants, and holding a slick Italian architecture magazine in his lap—he looked completely out of place here.

"What's going on?" I stopped, dizzy with champagne. The others went on.

"Oh, hello, doctor," he said. "Do you think maybe I will be going home soon?"

I scrutinized him. It was remarkable, the change in just three or four hours, almost unbelievable. But with ECT sometimes you saw this, it could be this dramatic.

"I'm better, doctor. You can see. As soon as the medicine wore off I knew I was better. I have a slight headache, yes. But the depression is completely gone."

"You are better," I said. "But it won't last."

"What do you mean?"

"Two treatments aren't enough."

"But I am *completely* better. Why shouldn't I go home today? Or in a few days at the latest."

"Maybe."

"I can sign out, of course."

"You can always sign out," I said.

"You know what it was," he said. "Why I became so depressed? I was trying at the bank to maintain my position—my moral position—after being disgraced. How was I to know the combination of events in Mexico and the recession would happen at a time that the bank was so vulnerable?"

It was bizarre: a madman turned by a few jolts of electricity into an ordinary, troubled man, a man overwhelmed by circumstances, outmaneuvered, exhausted perhaps but sane. He was not entirely convincing, though; there seemed to be gaps, discontinuities, odd pauses as we talked, which were too quickly interrupted. And he was so eager to convince me that everything was fine that I knew it couldn't be. But he did not sign out, and he agreed to go on with the treatments; he had a third the next day and a fourth two days later. Rickey and Mary and I did him so well his toes hardly curled.

On Friday after ECT I rushed to Rounds to sign my patients out for the weekend. We went through passes and medications and weekend problems, and it wasn't long until the Prince came up.

"He's had his fourth ECT today," I said. "I don't think he'll be much of a management problem over the weekend—he responded very well to the treatments."

"It *was* unusual," said Dr. Brauett. "Quite an abrupt response after three treatments . . ."

"Two," I said. "My question is whether we should give him more. He's not organic, hasn't had any noticeable memory loss. But since we usually give at least six . . ."

"That's true," said Brauett. "We know there's a certain rate of relapse with too few treatments. And other risks with too many. So what do you want to do?"

"I think I'll give one more."

"Fine."

"Okay, who's next?" the Head Nurse said. And we went on to the sadder, more desperate ones.

Dazed by the weekend, I was back in the ECT suite Monday morning; this time with one of the new Twos, Dr. Jenny Cohen, who I was supposed to train. We were busy as it was, with three new patients and seven old ones, and it was slower with Jenny learning, and by the time the Prince walked in, with Eddie behind him, it was nearly noon. The Prince looked great.

"Hello, doctor," he said. "You know I am much better over the weekend . . . I have thought about what to do with my life—whether to stay at the bank or not." He pulled off his bathrobe and climbed onto the gurney. "And I'm glad this will be my last treatment."

"So am I," I said.

"And I am no more trying to kill myself. It's like a dream I was in—an amazing dream that could not be real, but I see the marks on my neck, so I know it was real."

I introduced him to Jenny, and watched as she put the tourniquet around his arm and searched for a vein. She was quick and efficient. I wondered if she knew what she was getting into here. But she was just finishing Internship, and maybe this would seem easier to her, here and on the unit. It did, at first, seem easier, but then you saw how sick the people were and how hard it was to help them. Kohlman and Wagner had a point. Well anyway, I couldn't wait to move off the unit. My new office was on the bottom floor, on a quiet corridor with a half-dozen other offices, a white high-ceilinged room that looked out over the River. You couldn't actually see the River, only the glint of water below, but you could see all the ships going by and the buildings on the other side.

"Now tape it in," I said to Jenny. "Good."

She reached to Rickey for the syringe.

"Ready to start?" Rickey said.

"Let's go," she said.

"He's a strange guy, the Prince, don't you think?" one of the nurses said to me the next morning. "He says such weird things."

"What?" I said. "What is it? Is he depressed again?"

"No . . . I don't think so. Just

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strange. He and Miss Cutler were dancing at about two in the morning, he was saying he was going to make a film about his experiences . . ."

"Dancing?" I said.

"Yes, dancing," she said. "He's kind of hyper."

"I knew it," I said. "I knew we shouldn't have given five."

He was in his room, packing a large leather bag with clothes; things lay all over his bed and the floor, and balanced on one of the posts of his bed was a chessman—a black knight.

"Hello," he said. "Oh, how glad I am to leave. It was really a marvelous experience here, but now I have to get back to work—we're going to reorganize the bank totally, and I need access to the computer system." There was a sort of glaze over his face, and to his motions an activity that at first glance seemed cheerful, but on closer view was something else.

"I see," I said. "Sounds like you have a lot to do."

"An enormous number of things. Now I've wasted an entire week here and things may have slipped from my grasp . . . you understand how impossible it would be to reorganize the bank from inside the hospital."

He went on about the bank; I listened, waiting for a pause.

"You know of course, today is *my* last day here," I said.

"Oh, I know," he said.

"Do you think that might have something to do with . . ."

He looked at me as if I was insane. "No. Of course not. It is just that I am better. Perfect. That's all."

At eight that night, after rushing all day to write my off-service notes and introduce my patients to Dr. Cohen, I had a moment free finally to review the chart on a new admission, who had arrived four hours before. But Dr. Brauett was at the nursing station, wanting to talk.

"What about the Prince?" he said.

"Hypomanic," I said. "One of those patients where ECT precipitates a reaction . . . probably an underlying bipolar picture . . ."

"Ah. And what do you intend to do?"

"He wanted to leave, but I convinced him to stay, and . . ."

"Chemotherapeutically."

"I've started Lithium. And we've got *prns* of Haldol in case . . ."

"Good."

I stood up to go to my new admission.

"Oh, by the way, here's your evaluation for the year," he said. "A copy of this goes in your folder."

I opened the envelope and glanced at what he thought of me.

"Do you want to discuss it?"

"I . . . not now. I've got too many things to do."

"I have a few minutes."

I put it back in the envelope. It said things I knew too well were true, but would rather not think about now.

"Maybe some time later." I went to see my last admission of the year.

"I just wanted to talk to you about the Prince," Jenny said.

"He's still there?" It was three weeks later, and I had been in my office, waiting for a patient to arrive, when Jenny paged me.

"Not exactly. He *was* here but . . . he wandered off the unit. We can't find him. He wasn't ready to leave . . . we're trying to decide what to do."

"I thought you were going to discharge him the first week."

"We were, but he was too shaky. He had trouble with the Lithium . . . a DI-like syndrome—and we had to work that up . . ." She went on, talking about Lithium toxicity and organicity; I could hear in the background the sounds of the nursing station, someone repeating the word *medication, medication* . . . and in front of me, out the window, I looked at the greenhouse that was going up, blocking my view of the river. Its walls weren't clear—they were translucent, corrugated plastic that was bent over a metal frame. It was strange how from down here it was as though the unit and all its craziness didn't exist, as though the miserable, the suicidal, the murderous, all those who oscillated helplessly through states of misery and elation, did not and never had existed.

"Poor guy," I said. "I knew he'd have trouble with it."

"Who would know him?" Jenny was saying.

"I'm sorry?"

"Well, he's *gone*—we think . . . we're worried where he wandered off to . . ."

"Have you tried the Baroness?"

"No, who's she?"

"That blonde lady."

"No, I haven't seen her."

"Maybe she can help. Her number's in the chart somewhere. And two other people too. Very jet-setty . . . they came the first few days after he got here. And you could try his Embassy too, they kept calling when he first got here."

"Oh, we tried that," she said. "They're giving us a run-around, they won't even say if he's a real Prince."

"He's real."

"You think so?"

"Sure."

"It's not just some grandiose delusion? And what about the bank? You think he works at the bank too?"

"What do you mean? I thought this was pretty straightforward . . . you should be able to check that out."

"We called the bank—they don't know anything about him. We think maybe he has something to do with drugs. How well did you know him, anyway?"

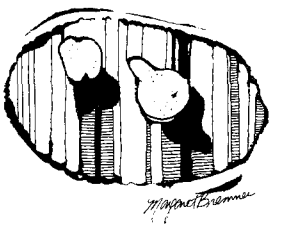
Inside the greenhouse a hazy figure walked by from right to left, stopped, raised up a hand; then there was a banging sound, a hard half-dozen times. Then the figure moved to the right, past my window, disappeared.

"I knew him . . . when he came in—he was very crazy. Very depressed. But I never . . . never really got to *know* him."

"Well, now he's gone. And we're trying to decide what to do. We don't think he's suicidal—but he's just so unstable . . . it's weird, everything he told you was wrong. Or *maybe* wrong. We just can't tell."

"Well, I don't know either. But let me know what happens, okay?"

"I wish we knew something about this guy."



She hung up. I wished I did too, but I guess I didn't. You could think you knew somebody from what they said, and what they didn't say—but then one thing could happen and you'd find yourself with nothing but a lot of lies. I couldn't believe that he had anything to do with drugs. It didn't make sense. Or that he wasn't a real Prince. He pulled it off too well. And besides, what about the Baroness and the young couple? He *had* to be real. I wondered where the hell he'd gone. —*David Hellerstein*

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Surface not Soul: A Historical Interlude

Jacques meets us at the Faculté, and once again, his thoughts on the wind, inveigles us outward at top speed, into the *banlieu nord*. Without a car, we see that coast at Jacques' grace. He pours it over us.

Several courses: Dougga rosé, red cabbage salad, *numidia bleu*, and for dessert strawberries farting in pools of cream. For the road. And for hours, then, we roar up and down through Sidi Bou Saîd, La Marsa, Gammarth, stopping, starting, waving our boaters, smoking imported Dutch cigars; tracking the *années folles* for a moment through the summer palaces of the Tunisian Beys. Hard rubber tires over historicity; surfaces.

Hanno, sitting beside me, thinks foremost of surfaces. How, he wonders, can I believe in the past I am crossing? How can I penetrate that surface? He goes with me and Jacques through the splendid broken Dar Chems palace, in a corner of Sidi Bou Saîd. We climb together up to the hillside of the marabout--tomb—the pilgrimage site—on the heights of La Marsa. We go up onto the French military cemetery and down into the Jewish catacombs at the foot of it. We drive along coast land sprinkled with Punic embankments. Hanno thinks: how can it touch me? Where can I find it?

Thinking with Hanno later, about Milton and cultural power, we touched on its relation to our ride with Jacques. Milton's text too had become a fascinating surface to Hanno—I was surprised to hear—and forced its attention on him, simply by asking him to complete it. (It was for this reason, I gather, that I one day came on Hanno copying the text of *Paradise Lost,* piddling with it, pretending he was writing it). Hanno was consulting this discovery, as he rode over the surface of the past.

Profundity, he later told me, played no part in the past we endured that day. There was no âme, no soul, even in that tomb-filled hillside of hours. There was, however, a somnolent soliciting, a weak lonely voice thrown upward by a past amazed that we should no longer care for it. That voice, Hanno told me, was the tone he was straining to hear.

Again he insisted, though, that what drew him to hear it was only *surface,* not *soul*. There was no soul of the past in the catacombs, or the marabout's tomb. For that matter, there was no soul in us, as we passed listening. Ear to ear with the dead of France: surface to surface. No heart left.

Despite that he was *drawn*; as I too had been, skirting the tombs of others, simple and thoughtless like myself, oblivious yet hurt as I would someday be. We were drawn to recognize that pulsing claim. Why, asked Hanno, did the claim survive in us? What spark of *pietas* singed us, through the superimposed glass of historical surfaces?

Structural pain once again lit the spark—claimed Hanno, who had meantime shown me his essay on Milton, and counted on the terms of that argument. Did I know what he meant; that these dead voices were an uncompleted labor, a pain against me?

I supposed, as I told him, that the marabout, the French soldier, and the Jewish proscript had their labors, which death cut short. These labors were theirs, in a sense; though in another sense no. (Hanno smiled. He felt me breathing toward his corner of argument.) In another sense these labors—prayers, defence, self-preservation—lay out at the side from their authors. These labors were not "filled with the souls of their makers," as we long to say; but were glossy surfaces of achievement and effort, symbolic heraldry of the spurts of consciousness. Nothing here demanded our reverence. We could scarcely fail, though, to deny the complexity of those achievements, as they interwove with the machinery of human survival. (Hanno applauded. Not once, in my paean to the historical claim, had I forced "profundity," *âme,* or "greatness" upon him.)

Therefore . . . a significant pause . . . we are touched, in these *randonnées folles*, these *crazy roamings*, by the loving pressure of a soulless past.

We saw that past as forcingly dissymmetrical to the present which finds it. The past does not meet the present head-on. Hanno spoke of the past's achievements as *projets* incumbent on us. This incumbency is oblique. If the past lay directly on my consciousness, I would only flee it. It would be a purely intolerable burden. But the pressure of the past is not direct. I "become conscious" of the marabout's life of prayer; of the Jewish proscript's life of exile; or of the French soldier's reason for dying. I don't *have* to become conscious. But if I do, it is at an angle, out from the side of my own existence; which in hurrying temporally away from the past unexpectedly bumps into it. The moral element, in consciousness of the past, raises itself at exactly this point.

Dead though Roman *pietas* is, it lives in us. Once we look at the past, says Hanno, we are fastened to it—cannot let it go. Our curiosity toward it is fatal. The past spreads like gossip. Even if we are only *interested* in the past, which is the response it justifies in us, we are in a position to support it, carrying selected *projets* farther inside us. Are we free either to, or not to, take this interest in the past? What is the moral element in our attention to the past?

We are of course "free" to pay no attention. Did Hanno need to look out the window, as we crossed Sidi Bou Saîd? Did I need to write down Hanno's opinions? Of course not. And yet . . .

Once again, says Hanno, we strike the "language question." The "moral question" turns on it.

Prior to "attending to the past," naming its *projets* to ourselves, we are free not to name it. There is no coercion. After naming various moves of the past, it is meaningless to ask whether we were free to name it. There is no meaningful sense in which we can look back and report that we were not free to name the past. Naming, as always, confers actuality by its taking place. Once we have articulated a project from the past, it has been moved directly into the space of attention, where it had to

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be simply because we exercised our freedom to make its, the old project's, necessity.

Meeting the past *projet* halfway, therefore, will mean taking responsibility for it. Hanno made me see this responsibility as a kind of curiosity, of directed superficiality; not as any saving of the past. We were to find, in ourselves, the power of responsibility; converting ourselves, as we did this, into *projets* incumbent on those who would be interested enough to make a future of us.

Hanno, as usual, would not leave the matter be. He drove toward the margins of the problem, in his skitterish way, and before long had me talking something he called "philosophy of history," under a tree in Tunis' largest park, Habib Thameur. The way in was something like this, as I remember.

Hanno reminded me of the ride with Jacques, then of the argument about *projets*, about superficial responsibility, and about the passion of curiosity. We shared again the pleasure of thinking about taking responsibility for a past project, of deciding to *attend to it*. What though, Hanno asked, would it mean to accept a much wider responsibility for my past? Enlarge slowly, to appreciate the problem. The marabout's holy but incomplete prayers—his life as a whole—may be incumbent on me. I may meet him on my way, as I go forward. I may at the same time stub my toe on the jawbone of the Jewish proscript, and decide to endure him, to write his name, to paint his comic carrelage, in a sand-box of bones. Always I will be enlarging my area of responsibility. But there will be no coming to rest in the process. I will reach no resting point in myself. I will come to the final boundary of what I accept. Finally—says wincing Hanno—I will do no good. All I will be doing—but what is that?—will be saving the world.

2.

Jacques and Hanno and I were my inventions. Now I take a moment, to salute their willingness to help.

I is, of course, my most surprising *invention*, for my language seemed to promise me greater identity than that, between myself and the products of my imagination. *I* too, however, was in reality one more product of imagination. I mean—did I believe what *I* said? Was I committed to what *I* said? No and yes. No because of the old theme: *lack of specific gravity* in what we say. But yes because of another old theme; the involvement of self in its fictions. What I say is arbitrary; but I am gifted at believing what I make up. "Words, doctor, are so free for the taking, so randomly and ripely just there." "The line between sense, free association, and jibberish is so hard to see. We tend to talk along a very narrow tight-rope of intelligibility." Or, doctor: "Nothing I say couldn't have been said equally well some other way. What I am doesn't seem to determine what I can or should say. My language is up in the air." Voices from the crowd. Little words, from little people lost in the things they might say, or in the things they made of themselves by chancing to say.

Little people telling big truth, leaving no doubt of their doubt of the I. Speaking because speaking gives them a life, which in general frames, stipulates, and supports more speaking of the same kind. Looking back on their speaking, though, when they do, with a doubt born of fear; a sense that all might be otherwise. A doubt, we have to admit, no way inapplicable to their own observations about the lack of specific gravity; an ironic turn, to the argument, which goes far to cut the pain of our windy condition. Systematic doubt has no privileged status. Doubt simply finds out even that system.

The I is established by convention and whim, two brothers in arms. How I construct myself, in the making of a language about me, is not *simply* one *projet* chosen among others, though that it is. It is such a *projet* activated against a backdrop of limitation. Free choice of I is freedom to choose among versions of the I. (The negotiation by which I choose, and at the same time give birth to this backdrop, goes farther into *this* aspect of the problem than we want to go at the moment). Whim is one name for this *projet*. (It names certain elements: airiness, the gift of simply breaking out at this or that point, spurts). Spontaneity and freeness are other names. Whatever the name of the act, however, we cannot imagine its happening except inside a framework of *rareté*, limit and scarcity.

Further limit constrains I-making, and if we care to look at it thus constrains even the limited freedom of the act of making one's I. "I" wrote this essay. "I" know how different it could be, how much better. "I" know how different the "I" constructed by the essay could be. Still, though "I" follow the lines of my construction, I do not make and then abandon. The self I work becomes the self I am.

This little point, neat in high polish, wants a half-hour's attention.

No fancy foot-work. Have I *constructed* my self or *found* it by writing this essay? I have done both. When I began writing, the shape and development of the effort were unclear to me. I "knew I had something to say." "I" was a bundle of arguments and points to make, most of them incomplete and teasingly left over to me from what I had done before. In some sense I already knew those arguments and points; for otherwise I could not have taken them on as a job. In some sense, then, I was already there, in full existence, prior to any of my efforts to establish a self. In *this* sense, "I" was not simply a construction of myself. I did not totally lack specific gravity in another sense. "I" was genuinely unclear, at the beginning, about what I would write. "I" was exploring. Each word was a daub of paint, with which I tried to add further detail to the portraying of a mind.

And in conclusion? How much constraint did lie across the I in its projection of a new version of the I?

Intricate constructions fly out of the answer. What the "I" was already, at the moment of making its essay, laid its constraint over the free "I" which was at that moment giving birth to word. What the "I" was already at that time however, was itself invoked by the free "I" which was calling it up to attention. Free "I," pure *projet*, is at no point absent from the "I" 's effort to write itself out. But it is present, to turn the knife once more, because the "I" of constraint is already there as a backdrop to freedom.

Committing myself and my thought I harden them, give them this firm shape in some construction I "believe in." I grow identical with myself. I answer the same kind of question in the same way year after year. People call me conservative (or radical), religious (or anti-religious), creative (or scientific). What they call me I "tend to become," I accept as

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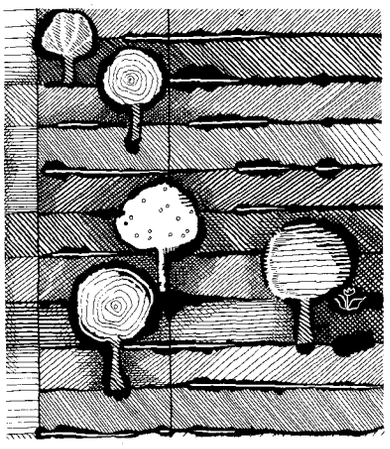
my part. In doing so I shed a quotient of security back onto my interlocutors. Knowing what "I am," they feel they know what "they are." And in these dreams of self-assurance interpersonal humanity, desperately maintaining itself, covers the globe with a thick network of specific gravity.

Put this way, the genesis of belief seems clouded in psycho-strategic mechanics. We have to wonder whether our "beliefs" give us any knowledge at all; whether they aren't a wall against the openness and "perceptiveness" which lead to knowing. Even if we understand "beliefs" loosely—as "positions"—we have to wonder whether they don't "wall us in." In the course of entertaining them, and accepting their shelter, we forget the width, openness, and true fire of the world given us.

Simplistic words, these. Pick up the theme of the self's involvement in its fictions. Isn't it in some sense "natural" for us to invest our width of perception in the narrow cage of the I? Isn't that *point de repère*, that touchdown point, the strength of the angle; the life-giving oblique look at the whole? Hasn't belief a lot to do with knowing?



We welcome constraint, as we make ourselves; and not least for the stability constraint assures us. My essay grows in my hands—once I have consented to its theme, even to the theme which in my handling I may subvert. (Whereas if I "keep myself free," my essay turns corners on itself, reshapes itself startlingly.) Not only that, but the investment of myself in a particular *projet*—a style, a theme, a point of view—is both conservation and accretion of my own energy. It is a harboring from which thought can sail out in strong flotillas, united in one wind.

Still, however, we skitter away from the "promontory of truth." Investing myself, assuming a distinctive argument outward from myself, seems too arbitrary a guard against arbitrariness; a way of fleeing lack of commitment by flying to believe, calling out *I believe in this, I believe in that.*

Seems too arbitrary. But look closer at the cognitive work done by belief—as it exposes itself in a text. The present essay entertains the belief that history is a surface of *projets*. (In this it rejects other beliefs concerning the nature of history: for instance the belief that even the micro-structure of history is not intentional; or the belief that history is a deep construction, profoundly available to us as thought.) It *seems* arbitrary, we come to say, that this particular "belief" should be chosen. It is not, of course, as though there were no "reason" for this choice. There are "personal" reasons—elements of the chooser's autobiography; and there are "considerations of truth."

"Truth" is the consideration concerning us here. How does my concern for the truth announce itself in the stress I lay on a particular description of history? Can the specific gravity I arrogate to myself become an element in my search for the truth?

The problem: to study the verifiability of assertions, about the nature of history, requires standing outside of those assertions and looking back on them. But how is this possible? In logic it seems impossible. I cannot both maintain and consider a position. And in empirical fact this particular acrobatics seems impossible; for I seem doomed to act within history, even when I reflect onto the nature of history. My historical condition takes place profoundly prior to my reflection on that condition. My choice of a projection is profoundly conditioned by the historical moment out from which I choose.

Solution: there is none. We deposit our intentions in various centers of argument and belief, and we do so from absolutely different historical perspectives. Through this subjective process, which manages at every turn to occlude the truth from us, we test the truth-value of whatever belief we choose. (Test; and remain as conscious as we can of the pitfalls we construct for ourselves.) How do we test the truth of a belief concerning the nature of history?

We try it out. We take a belief, like Hanno's, and use it in daily contexts: in thinking of our own ancestry, that of our city, that of man on the globe. Does that history become more meaningful, as we look at it in this or that way? Do we see more inside that history than we did before? (Questions based on the assumption, which I see no need to question, that correct theories open out their material more than incorrect ones.) If the belief seems to work, we may say that it has a bond with the truth. But how much can we properly mean by such a phrase?

We can mean that every act of choosing a *projet*, of making oneself a belief, is an effort to reach truth: to approximate that condition in which the full meaning of the *projet* will indicate itself. *Projets* will be found, of course, whose purpose is to "deceive." (Even in literary terms: I could assume beliefs as masks, in an essay like this; and could in this way turn my "inquiry" into complete fiction, making the semblance of a search for the truth into a "drama of ideas.") But in those cases a "different kind of truth" is envisaged; the truth of deft vraisemblance, not that of *correspondence*. (Haggard enough shorthand, admittedly, for a long theory of truth; but the best explanatory cliché in our present argument.)

The intention of "truthfulness," then, is an element in the self's choice of belief-*projets*. Further constraint on the self's freedom imposes itself through this search for truth; which even as outer limit on *projets* marks the ambitions and pretentions of beliefs.

Does the search for truth condition *projets* more fundamentally than that, more nearly from their own inside?

I try to "commit myself" to the most valid account of what history is. Investing myself in a position I "ground myself." I no longer fly free—though I have chosen, in free flight, to make a landing. In addition to "investing myself," I adopt a position I think true; from which, that is, I expect clarification to follow as I pursue the application of belief. This cozying to the truth is a limit on freedom; and one which in part rises from the inherent needs of my *projet*, which is an effort to validate itself from beyond itself, to spring from subject under the blessing of object.

Freedom and its inventiveness prom-

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ised to lead the argument, to run circles around history, around any blankly given fate. And here we are reneging, counting out the ways in which freedom itself runs to subdue freedom. Perhaps our only recourse, if we want really to win the battle for freedom, in the construction of *projets*, is to return to the beginning—both of this interlude and of the inception of reflections on freedom.

I began prancing, with words about my inventions: Hanno, Jacques, myself. At that point—fatal undertaking—we discoursed about the lack of specific gravity in discourse. From lack of such gravity to commitment, however, proved to be a fatal step. At first we bathed our language in the absence of constraint—an absence than which no presence could be fuller. Immediately upon engagement, however, that initiatory freedom had given itself to historical constraint. Perhaps—though how not to?—we moved too fast.

Freedom, we may want to say, precedes even our discourse about freedom and necessity. No matter how far we push the argument back toward its origins, we find—we may see—freedom there at the origin of our pushing. Whatever this assertion means—and I turn to that immediately—it is not one which could be made about necessity.

We assert that freedom converts itself instantly into necessity. In retrospect—a crude epistemic cross-cutting, charging from memory—we mark our assertion as a spurting of freedom. Or is it *from* freedom? The assertion is there. I want to add that the assertion is uncalled for; that it is "spontaneous." I *want* to. Instead, more carefully, I find myself adding that the assertion, of which the effect comes over me, broke from me with the rarity and translucency I usually attribute to consciousness.

Freedom? How can I know that even it, in its primal spurt, was not bound? Some God may hold it in his hand, freeing it charily to me, at his will. Or it may appear through some heartless leak in astronomy, reaching my threshhold as pure élan, though it began its career as necessity.

Freedom is in either case destined to instant self-transformation. I can not endure not to use my freedom, committing it to history. As soon as I use it, it is no longer free; but until I use it, it is not significantly free. —*Frederic Will*

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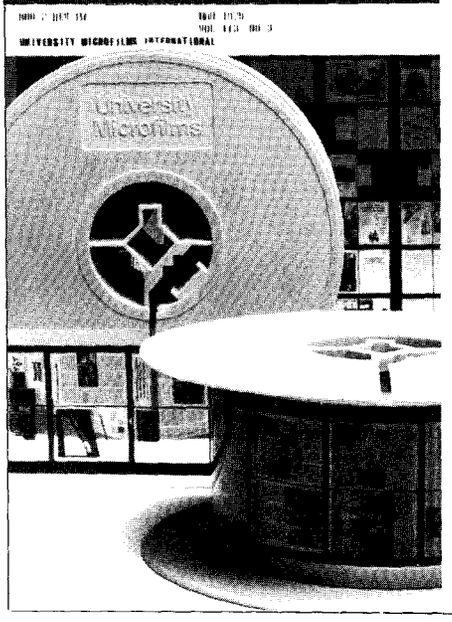

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America's Forgotten Structural Grammarian

In all the excitement about structuralism, who notices that the structural grammar which suggested it began as long ago as 1837, in Solomon Barrett's *The Principles of Grammar?* Despite thirty-seven editions (with various titles) and such then-famous subscribers as Daniel Webster, Longfellow, and former presidents Fillmore and Pierce, no one uses Barrett's grammar now, apparently—perhaps because it just missed making its questions useful for learning more than grammar.

Barrett's title pages often describe him as a professor of philology, but no college, biography, or history of linguistics seems to have any information about him. The records of Saint Lawrence County in northern New York say he came there with his parents in 1816-20, possibly from Massachusetts, and died in that county in 1882, his age unknown. He said he first taught his grammar in Blountsville (now Knoxville), Tennessee, in 1823. He lived at three addresses in three years in Utica, New York in 1845-48, and then in Middlefield, New York in 1850, Boston in 1853, Buffalo in 1857, and Manhattan in 1859-60. As the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes, in those years *professor* could mean any teacher. Knoxville and Middlefield were then small towns, and Barrett had his first book published in another, Milton, North Carolina, in 1830, and all his books seem meant for grade schools; he may have spent most of his life teaching grammar in grade schools in towns too small to have city registers. He may also have had to keep moving, if he bragged as his books do about inventing the first grammar based on "the principle of relations."

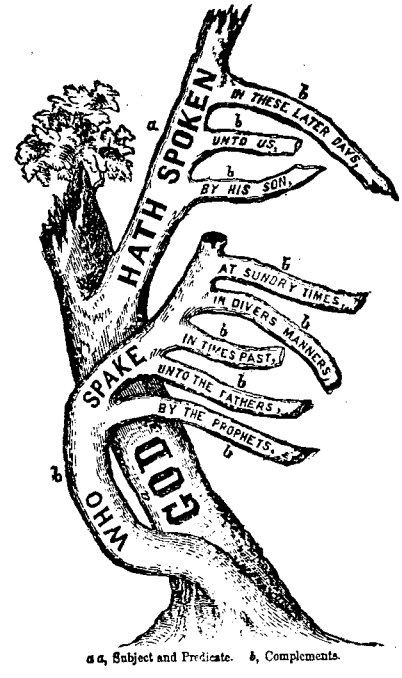
That invention resulted from practising what Francis Bacon preached, turning from a blind trust in traditional authorities and merely verbal arguments to a systematic analysis of the facts. As Barrett boasted, this let him write the first inductive, the first scientific grammar of English. Instead of dictating what we *should* say, as other grammarians had, he used actual samples of English to show what in fact we do say. By "the principle of relations" he meant that we classify words by where we use them in the phrase and sentence patterns, the structures of English which show how each word relates to all the rest. Any word we use instead of *blank* in "a *blank* day" works as an adjective there, no matter what it means or what ending it has, and defining by structures can make structural grammar useful in a way not even Barrett mentioned.

To judge by his books, Barrett never taught how to think and write by asking more useful questions than 'Is this word an adjective?' Having seen a word becomes an adjective or other part of speech by patterning as one, he produced a list of twenty-one patterns, each one defining a different part of speech. But the two-word patterns he used often prove ambiguous, as well as not very informative. We can see the pattern of "*Man* walks" as *noun* + verb; we can also see it as a *verb* + noun command in some cases, or as an *adjective* + noun phrase. As Charles Carpenter Fries showed in the next structural grammar of English (in 1952!), we need more complicated patterns to avoid such confusions, and he provided them, apparently without ever having known of Barrett. In *Patterns of English*, Paul Roberts used Fries' grammar to show high school students how to mass produce grammatical sentences by substituting their choices of words into those patterns, as in

noun	*verb*	*adjective*	*adverb*
Sue	is	sad	now
Tom	was	glad	Monday
Amy	felt	mad	

and so on; even so simple a pattern can produce astronomically many possibilities because, among other reasons, we can put not just single words into each place in the pattern, but also whole phrases, such as "that beautiful blonde I so happily met accidentally in a blizzard in Chicago last year."

But to write intelligently, we also need to consider (1) why we choose each word and pattern (what do they mean?), (2) how we get from one word or sentence to the next, and so (3) which patterns we choose for whole pieces of writing, and (4) how we can change patterns to make them fit particular needs and situations. For example, once we have said "Sue is sad now," we can go on to why, who knows it and how, what happens next as a result—questions which can help us learn, and have more to say, a possibility Barrett, Fries, Roberts, and traditional grammarians all ignore.



Unlike the more recent diagrams in traditional and transformational grammars, Solomon Barrett's tree diagrams look like trees. They show the structures sentences have, starting with the root (the whole sentence) at the bottom, and working upward to the last little details.

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But in 1876, in his last book, Barrett asked such questions: *A 'Signal' Grammar of the English Language* used this sentence pattern to show the questions he thought every language answers, each in its own way:

How many?	*What kind?*	*Who did it?*	*What is done?*	*When, how, where?*
Two	young	boys	walk	now slowly there.
	adjectives	*noun*	*verb*	*adverbs*

Does every language ask these questions because every human needs to ask them? Though Barrett did not say so, we must ask and answer such questions to have information to report; Fries' basic *Sue is sad now* pattern expresses subjective and often confusingly ambiguous judgments instead. Why didn't Barrett make more of his question-asking sentence pattern? By 1876, he had taught and written about grammar for at least fifty-three years, and he may have had no time or energy left for outgrowing old habits; his books suggest he had spent his life teaching students how to classify words, and trying to write a universal grammar which would describe what proves essential to every language, and every human. He used the question-asking pattern only for these purposes, and not as a way to learn about any subject by asking and answering questions about it. Teachers apparently went on using Barrett's grammar for a generation past his death; in 1965, I met a teacher of high school English in Oregon who had been taught the pre-1876 form of Barrett's grammar in about 1914. I happened to mention it to him only because one of my students had just found the 1848 edition of *The Principles of Grammar* in her garage. The teacher did not use Barrett's grammar, because he had found both it and traditional grammar useless in helping students learn to write intelligently.

Why? Like traditional grammar, Barrett's exists to name the words in already-written sentences as *noun, adjective,* and so on. Barrett's grammar does this more accurately because it distinguishes twenty-one rather than the traditional eight to ten parts of speech, and because it does so by how the words pattern.* But merely naming parts of speech helps no one put together efficiently informative new sentences of their own. So we call *now* an adverb; so what can we say with it? As Barrett began to see, each part of speech asks or answers certain types of questions: an adverb may tell us *when, where,* or *how*. But perhaps as a result of what schools and parents expected, Barrett seemed more intent on classifying words than on what can be said with them. He assumed all languages have the same basic grammar, his; he thought they all express the same questions and ideas, but in different words and patterns. He listed those ideas in terms of Newton's view of the universe as all matter at rest or in motion in various ways, times, and places in this "Table of Ideas":

The universal ideas		*The parts of speech which name them*
X (subject) Matter		nouns, pronouns
Y (predicate) Rest or Motion		verbs
A Quantity B Quality	of Matter	adjectives
C Manner D Time E Place	of Rest or Motion	adverbs
F Comparison		articles
G Connection		conjunctions, prepositions

These suggest a part of what we need to ask to understand the universe, ourselves included: the *who does what?* (X + Y) basic to reports, and the qualifiers, connections, and comparisons (A – E) which make them usefully specific, and from which whole pieces of writing grow, as Barrett did not say.

Instead, Barrett patriotically hoped his grammar would add to America's glory by teaching students how to identify every word correctly, and so not make mistakes which would make them seem like country bumpkins. In other words, though he had invented a new method, he applied it to the same old goal, seeming socially proper, and never mind intelligence. He seems not to have noticed that while a democracy needs very few grammarians, it does need a voting majority who do ask and answer questions intelligently, and so avoid getting misled by confused or dishonest language, a goal obviously not yet reached. In 1972, the Yale psychologist Irving Janis' book *Victims of Groupthink* showed how failing to ask such questions helped cause such fiascos as the Bay of Pigs invasion; the questions did not get asked because no one wanted to seem socially improper enough to upset the groups responsible. But we can and need to ask such questions. As George Orwell pointed out in *Politics and the English Language*, because our language and the rest of our behavior affect each other, we can and need to improve at least our political behavior by making our English more tersely honest.

The traditional grammar most schools still teach does remarkably little to encourage useful questions. Instead, it distracts students from them by having them name the parts of sentences, as if the names and not the meaning mattered. So did Barrett, and in 1842, he invented a new distraction which makes the naming even more time-consuming, his remarkably literal tree diagrams. The one illustrated displays the structure of a sentence from Saint Paul's *Epistle to the Hebrews*, I:1-2:

God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in times past unto the

*As Barrett knew and Fries demonstrated, traditional grammer does not define the parts of speech in any clear, accurate, and systematic way, because it mostly ignores the patterns which do define them.

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fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His son.

A more complicated sentence produces a whole forest of Barrett's diagrams, but even simple ones may take more artistic ability than most students have. But drawing diagrams can keep whole classes quietly busy for hours, which may explain why simplifications by other authors soon appeared, culminating in the diagrams in Alonzo Reed and Brainerd Kellogg's *Work on English Grammar and Composition*, diagrams which many texts still use. Such diagrams may not teach students how to read or write more intelligently, but they can save teachers from teaching those skills. As a result, the only part of Barrett's grammar which has had any lasting effect on the teaching of English seems the least useful, the one most apt to keep students from thinking enough to ask possibly awkward questions. But if you regard grammar as primarily a form of etiquette, you will welcome such diagrams because they tend to prevent such questions.

A structural grammar might prove more exciting, and less polite; it would have students use variations of the structures of English to invent new questions and answers. We can learn to write, and to think by writing, by such a recreating of what we read and hear. For example, students could learn how to write parallel structures by inventing their own variations of the sentence from the Bible which Barrett diagrammed, by asking the questions it answers (*who did what when*, and *how*, and has done *what* more recently, and *how?*), and trying out their own answers, a learning by experimenting with language which strikes many traditionally-minded teachers as blasphemous, and not just when the patterns come from the Bible. But Barrett's failure to exploit such variations seems doubly odd because in 1857, Byron Simeon Barrett's *International and Commercial Dictionary* used Solomon Barrett's grammar to show how to translate sentences in English, French, Spanish, and German into one another by changing their words and patterns. Byron may have been Solomon Barrett's son: Byron was born in 1831, both lived at 72½ Chippewa Street in Buffalo the year the dictionary appeared, and it was sometimes sold bound together with Solomon Barrett's grammar. Byron showed the patterns with numbers:

THE

PRINCIPLES

OF

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A COMPENDIOUS TREATISE ON THE LANGUAGES,

ENGLISH, LATIN, GREEK, GERMAN, SPANISH AND FRENCH.

FOUNDED ON THE

IMMUTABLE PRINCIPLE OF THE RELATION WHICH ONE WORD SUSTAINS TO ANOTHER.

He brought in a new way of arguing by induction, and that grounded on observation and experience. — BACER.

By SOLOMON BARRETT, JR.,

PHILOLOGIST.

REVISED EDITION.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY IRA BRADLEY AND CO.

1866.

The title page of one of Solomon Barrett's later grammars. He had essentially the same book published at least thirty-seven times in 1837-76, as The Principles of Language, The Principles of English Grammar, The Principles of Grammar, A New Inductive Grammar of the English Language, *and finally* A 'Signal' Grammar of the English Language, *often adding material but always repeating the old material unchanged, as if he spent his life elaborating upon his one great idea without noticing its shortcomings.*

"I think I will go down town," 1234567 in English, became 1234675 in German, and other word-orders in other languages. Solomon had shown such patterns with the letters of his Table of Ideas, and had made his grammar multilingual twenty years earlier. But neither Byron nor Solomon Barrett showed how to rewrite one pattern into another in the same language, or how to use such patterns to write original sentences by asking questions.

Had either shown how to rewrite patterns in the same language, he might have invented a transformational grammar a century before Noam Chomsky's *Syntactical Structures* in 1957. If you describe the order of the words in a seven-word sentence as 1234567, and then try scrambling that order, you may notice that only a few of the 5,039 other possible orders prove grammatical in English; try it and see. You could go on to write directions for transforming one grammatical pattern into another, with or without changes of meaning or emphasis, but neither Barrett did. They contented themselves with simply indicating which patterns to use in each language, perhaps because we can carry out such transformations in English so easily, so much as a matter of unthinking habit, that they hardly seem to need any explanation. For example, we can transform an active to a passive statement, as in changing "John loves Mary" to "Mary is loved by John," so easily that we can do it quite automatically after only a little practice.

Solomon Barrett came tantaliz-

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ingly close to providing structural recipes for writing original sentences when he described sentence patterns as sets of questions, and when he explained such relationships as comparisons by using such patterns as __er *than* __; fill in the blanks of that pattern and you have a comparison, such as "younger than springtime." But Barrett did not seem to notice that we need to keep on asking questions, using more complicated patterns, to get from such isolated phrases and sentences to whole pieces of writing: *who* or *what* seems younger than springtime to *whom*, *why*, and *what* might that impression cause? To organize what we think and feel, we need to make the connections and comparisons these patterns make possible. Though writing by patterns may seem mechanical, we all use them if it helps us think and write more intelligently by finding unexpected connections and comparisons. As with music, simple changes produce remarkably many possibilities. For example, the Russian structuralist Vladimir Propp's analysis of fairy tales shows they have a thirty-one part pattern, starting with the hero or someone in his family leaving home, and ending with his reward, such as marrying the beautiful princess. The tales may leave out one or more parts, a simple type of change which makes several billion variations possible, and makes the pattern a productive recipe for writing.

But instead of using such patterns as recipes for writing to help students ask and answer questions, and so get beyond naming the parts of isolated sentences, Barrett tried to write a universal grammar. So do transformational grammarians now. They claim we must all get born with such a grammar: how else could children learn to speak any language grammatically when they hear only an incomplete and ungrammatical sampling of it from adults? But how do children then unlearn enough to become ungrammatical adults? And if we have such a grammar at birth, why does it take children months of trying to learn as much of their language as adults know?

It seems more reasonable to suppose that what we learn to speak and write depends on what we hear and read, and on the encouragement our efforts receive; what happens in homes and schools does matter. Not even Shakespeares learn all of any language, much less with that automatic and absolute intuitive accuracy which transformational grammarians assume we all have. What we learn and do reflects our circumstances, so what we write and say can become as distinctively individual as our fingerprints: some courts now accept voiceprints as evidence, and competent novelists give their characters recognizably individual and appropriate styles. We can duplicate such styles by choosing similar words and patterns. Parodies make such choices obviously absurd, a technique so easy that parodies of Hemingway have long since become both a tired joke and a cliché many mystery novels still solemnly echo. But we can learn from such mistakes by learning how to make more intelligent choices. Had Barrett explained even one pattern as a recipe for writing, and how to ask questions to elicit information and test our choice of answers, we might use his grammar now. We can still learn from what he almost did, and invent structural grammars which do help us write and think.

–Robert Ian Scott

The Vonnegut Cosmos

Deadeye Dick, by Kurt Vonnegut. Delacorte/Seymour Lawrence. $14.95

Kurt Vonnegut once wrote that Joseph Heller's first two novels are full of excellent jokes, but neither are funny; ". . . they tell a tale of pain and disappointment experienced by mediocre men [and women] of good will." This same judgment might be made about Vonnegut's work, including his new novel, *Deadeye Dick*.

Like the Rolls-Royce in the book, *Deadeye Dick* has "scraped up against something blue." That blue is the quiet penance of the protagonist, Rudy Waltz, whose father was a maniacal failed artist famed only for befriending Adolph Hitler before the war, and whose mother was a mindless ornament unable to care for herself or family until her death from brain tumors that "bloomed" from a radioactive fireplace.

Rudy Waltz is "Deadeye Dick," a nickname he earned on Mother's Day at age 12 when he was initiated into manhood by being given the care of his father's gun collection. Rudy is caressing a Springfield rifle in the cupola atop his house when he squeezes the trigger and sends a bullet across Midland City into an unseen target, directly between the eyes of a pregnant woman vacuuming in her second floor guest room.

Deadeye Dick will likely stand as Vonnegut's most tightly crafted and complex work to date. It is an artful dance of fictional skill that interweaves ideas he has expressed before with new and old characters who are spin-offs from previous novels and from figures out of his own life he has discussed in print. The novel's form unfolds as though it were a kaleidoscopic deck of cards magically transformed from a linear order of successive suits into a new pattern of intricate and vaguely familiar design. This is not a book to be read quickly. Rather, it is to be savored, slowly and repetitively, for the benefit of its rich density.

It's not likely that *Deadeye Dick* will receive immediate critical acclaim. That the perceptions of Vonnegut's novels are largely misunderstood is exactly the point he writes to. As a former student of his, I can remember a boozey literary argument in Iowa City, where he taught back in 1965, when one of my fellow students in the Writers Workshop said: "If what Vonnegut is saying in his novels is true, then there's no reason to even stay alive." That, of course, is Vonnegut's very point: Life is often a cruel accident; the dilemma of humanity is how to stay alive with decency in the face of that reality.

If one had the talent of a Vonnegut, one could make a whimsical novel from any morning paper: disasters interlaced with a few jokes, some recipes, and some music. But probably it would be ill-received. Someone would say that the paper should print the *good* news. Alas, there's not a lot of it around. Vonnegut's novels are saying that if we can perceive the realities of the chaos around us, it might be possible for us to cut through the glaze of false hope that blinds us to the truth of our own self-destructive history, a history that got stuck, as he says in *Deadeye Dick*, in the Dark Ages. Perhaps, if we could do that, we might be able to

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think and act more responsibly about the future of our planet.

What are the false hopes his novels suggest distort our vision, and thus sustain our repetitive self-destruction? They come from our misuse of just about everything held sacred in Western civilization: organized religion, love, money, war, firearms, righteousness, parenthood, marriage, medicine, technology, art, and even language itself.

What might prevent us from destroying ourselves? The practice of common decency might help, along with the ability to laugh at ourselves. Recipes don't seem to do much harm, nor do music or restroom graffiti. Birdsong imitations and scat-singing can help "shoo the blues away. . . ."

So Vonnegut is a scandal. He refuses to honor traditional institutions, and his uncritically loving fans of the 'sixties have largely joined those institutions they, too, once decried. His inventive narrative structures are distressing to the literary establishment, and his language is unseemly.

Should we then take *Deadeye Dick*, his tenth novel, seriously as a work of literary art even if he, presumably, does not? Yes, indeed. In so doing, we will see a master shaman at work again in one of the most finely tuned and complex of all his books, even if one of the more painful.

As a prelude to reading this book, I would suggest the reader take another look at his 1973 novel, *Breakfast of Champions*. There, Vonnegut, the inventor of this fiction, enters the story as himself and expresses his credo as a writer, one central to the shaping of *Deadeye Dick:*

> As I approached my fiftieth birthday, I had become more and more enraged and mystified by the idiot decisions made by my countrymen. And then I had come suddenly to pity them, for I understood how innocent and natural it was for them to behave so abominably, and with such abominable results: They were doing their best to live like people invented in story books. This was the reason Americans shot each other so often: It was a convenient literary device for ending short stories and books . . .
>
> Once I understood what was making America such a dangerous unhappy nation of people who had nothing to do with real life, I resolved to shun storytelling. I would write about life. Every person would be exactly as important as any other. All facts would also be given equal weightiness. Nothing would be left out. Let others bring order to chaos. I would bring chaos to order, instead, which I think I have done.
>
> If all writers would do that, then perhaps citizens not in the literary trades would understand that there is no order in the world around us, that we must adapt ourselves to the requirements of chaos instead.
>
> It is hard to adapt to chaos, but it can be done. I am living proof of that: It can be done.

Certainly *Deadeye Dick* is a story about adaptation to chaos, but the Preface to the novel hints of another connection to *Breakfast* when Vonnegut says he is writing this book as his sixtieth birthday "winks" at him, and identifies the symbolism of "an unappreciated, empty arts center in the shape of a sphere," which is to be seen as his own head. In *Breakfast*, the same Center, named for Mildred T. Barry, is located in the same Midland City of *Deadeye Dick*. Furthermore, the Preface to *Breakfast* tells us that Vonnegut is throwing out the characters from his previous books, and is trying to empty his head of things that other people have put into it. In that book, he says goodbye to Kilgore Trout, the perennial science fiction writer of past Vonnegut novels. (Trout is probably reincarnated in *Deadeye Dick* as the Haitian voodoo artist, Hippolyte Paul DeMille, who can raise ghosts from the dead, even as Vonnegut does when he resurrects characters from his previous books.) In *Deadeye Dick*, many of the newly invented characters of *Breakfast* are reinvented and given further development. Dwayne Hoover, the Pontiac dealer, and his wife Celia appear again, and we learn why the Celia of *Breakfast* killed herself by drinking Drāno.

The connection between the two novels is inescapable, and it tempts us to look more deeply for other ties to Vonnegut's literary past, a move that could very well result in a bibliophilic orgy. For not only will one find a re-crystallization of old characters, but one will find further development of old refrains and images that take us back at least as far as *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* for an earlier incarnation of Rudy Waltz. It includes *Happy Birthday Wanda June* and *Palm Sunday*, where Vonnegut tells us his father was a "gun nut," rather like Rudy's father, Otto Waltz. It takes us to *Slapstick* where we are told that "Life ideally . . . should be like the Minuet or the Virginia Reel or the Turkey Trot, something easily mastered in dancing school." Rudy's waltz in *Deadeye Dick* is not easily mastered, but he does survive the chaotic accidents of his life by adapting, and by quietly and decently becoming a house servant to his helpless and now financially ruined parents. As an adult he becomes a night-shift pharmacist at Schramm's Drugstore where he dispenses aspirin and hemorrhoid remedies, temporary reliefs for life's pains and congestions, along with perfumes and cheap wristwatches—little gifts for buyers who have forgotten the birthday of a friend. Rudy's ministrations, like Rosewater's, are the harmless but useful prescriptions Vonnegut offers readers with his stories.

Which is to say, the anachronistic immediacy of *Deadeye Dick* is a highly crafted example of the Vonnegut art he has always insisted he is trying to invent: time, action, characters, setting, all have equal balance in the kaleidoscopic picture that real life is. Vonnegut doesn't bother with slicing it up. We get the whole thing at once, in a form which can free us from our addiction to the linearity of time and causality—an addiction which often cripples us with simplistic, pompous and myopic perceptions.

Not that Rudy Waltz is to be seen as a great visionary. He tells us as the novel opens that he "was a wisp of undifferentiated nothingness, and then a little peephole opened quite suddenly. Light and sound poured in. Voices began to describe me and my surroundings. Nothing they said could be appealed." The peephole image, introduced in *Breakfast* and central to Vonnegut's 1980 *Sun Moon Star* (a story he made up to fit illustrations by Ivan Chermayeff), is used throughout the novel to insist that the perceptions and behaviors of all his characters are accidental to their cultural surroundings.

Vonnegut's novels have long argued against the philosophical concept of free will. In the Preface to *Deadeye Dick*, he tells us that Rudy's nickname was originally for a sailor. "A deadeye," he explains, "is a rounded wooden block usually bound with rope or iron, and pierced with holes. The holes receive a multiplicity of lines, usually shrouds or stays, on an old-fashioned sailing ship. But in the American Middle West of my youth, a 'Deadeye Dick' was an honorific often accorded to a person who was a

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virtuoso with firearms. So it is a sort of lungfish of a nickname. It was born in the ocean, but it adapted to life ashore." And of course, this is what the protagonist of the novel and his fellow characters try to do. Adapt to the chaos of life ashore, with their bodies bound by genetic structures and their perceptual holes open to the lines of the culture which shapes them.

Not all the characters are successful in their adaptation. One of the least successful is Celia Hildreth Hoover, a woman who we are given to understand is launched on her painful course to drug addiction and suicide by the accident of her remarkable beauty. It was a beauty which made her "ready to die at any time, she said, because what men and boys thought about her and tried to do to her made her so ashamed." Her shame is heightened on the night she has her first and only date with Rudy's brother, Felix, to attend the high school prom. Felix has promised his father to bring her to his parent's home before going to the party. Unbeknownst to him, however, father Otto Waltz has extracted that promise in order to enact one of the legend-based fantasies through which he enlivens his otherwise drab life. He greets Felix and beautiful Celia as the "King of the Early Evening," attired in the scarlet-and-silver uniform of a major in the Hungarian Life Guard, complete with sable busby and panther skin. Otto garbles up the legend of Helen with the myth of Aphrodite, and addresses a stunned Celia with "Let Helen of Troy come forward—to claim this apple if she dare!" Whereupon Celia, in humiliation and fear, sheds her golden dancing shoes and corsage and takes off running, in one of those hilariously painful scenes Vonnegut is famed for.

What we see in this scene is the careful thematic and character development the author is unfolding. Rudy and Felix are used to their father's antics, and are relatively unruffled by them. Their mother's only life is as a participant in her husband's fantasies. But when the myth is imposed on a newcomer like Celia, "a goddess who could not dance, would not dance" (cannot live adaptively), it can be misinterpreted and result in painful destructiveness, even as Vonnegut has shown, in *Breakfast of Champions,* that Celia's husband Dwayne turns homicidal when he be-

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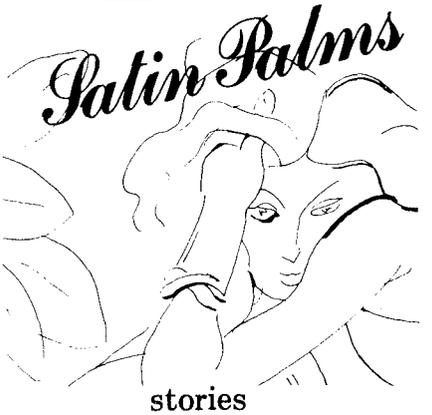

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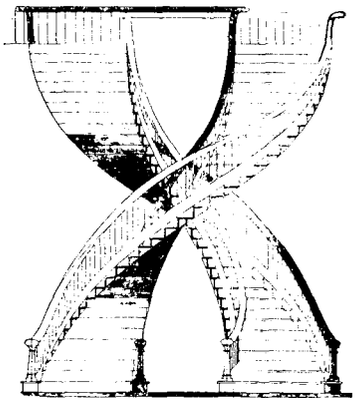

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lieves he is truly the character with free will in one of Kilgore Trout's novels. It is what Vonnegut has been warning us about all along: if we take romantically violent myths or legends (or novels) like the Trojan War seriously as truth, we may find ourselves unconsciously shaped into destructiveness by them. This is not a new idea for Vonnegut. His first novel in 1952, *Player Piano,* is set in Ilium (Troy).

Celia's dilemma figures strongly in two other developments in the book. It is suggested that the one joyful experience of her life occurred when she portrayed a character in a play written by Rudy. The play, which failed miserably in a one-night performance in New York, was produced later in Midland City by the local Mask and Wig Club. Celia played the role of the ghost of the hero's wife in a Shangri-la type play about John Fortune, Rudy's boyhood hero, who sought paradise in Katmandu after his wife's death. The closing lines of the play, spoken by Fortune as he dies, are: "Come on over. There's room for everybody in Shangri-la." Which is to say, everybody can enjoy the temporary illusion of the arts, but don't take them too seriously. For, as Rudy discovered in his research for the play, the real story of John Fortune is that he never experienced Katmandu. He was carried, dying, on a stretcher to the paradise.

The beautiful fantasy of that play, however, had been taken seriously by Celia. We see her later in her life in a vivid scene with Rudy at night in the drugstore—a store, it's useful to remember, once a part of the Waltz family fortune derived from the production of "a quack medicine known as 'Saint Elmo's Remedy.' It was grain alcohol dyed purple, flavored with cloves and sarsaparilla root, and laced with opium and cocaine. As the joke goes: It was absolutely harmless unless discontinued."

Celia's despair is no joke when we see her in this scene, although it is developed in a kind of slapstick drama in the actual form of a play, a device Rudy uses throughout the novel to stylize and cope with embarrassing memories. Rudy sees a small, wretched customer inspecting dark glasses on a carousel, a customer who turns to face him with "the addled, raddled, snaggle-toothed ruins of the face of Celia Hoover, once the most beautiful girl in town." Celia is by now a hopeless drug addict on the eve of her suicide. She has come to Rudy ostensibly to ask for another play, for more beautiful words to say to an appreciative audience. She wants Rudy to "Write a crazy old lady play" with words that should come out of her new face, which is now—much to her relief—ugly. She wants Rudy to be her doctor with the medicine of his magic words.

With tired cynicism Rudy speculates that this adoring woman really wants amphetamines without a prescription—and he refuses. When Celia responds by saying "What makes you so afraid of love?" the telephone rings, and Rudy returns from a brief conversation to report that "Somebody wanted to know if I was Deadeye Dick." He then tells Celia that he knows she will soon become abusive because of her long-term use of amphetamines. "I can take that if I have to," Rudy says, "but I'd rather get you home some way." Celia tells him her husband is gone, her son hates her, and that her doctor has been beaten up by her husband for prescribing the pills that destroyed her. She throws gold coins worth thousands of dollars at his feet

against the damage she may do, and begs him to hug her. When he instead telephones the police, she begins to destroy the drugstore, starting with the carousel of dark glasses.

This five-page drugstore scene is representative of the novel's density, and it's worth unraveling. First of all it functions to develop the character of the woman who has been crippled for living by the cultural response to her beauty. As a result, she substitutes the chemical energy of drugs and the artistic energy of literary fantasy for the adaptive dance of life. This addiction drives her to destroy herself and others, a destruction she is now able to justify because she has money to pay for the damages. This characterization reflects again Vonnegut's view of the destructiveness that can come from living by illusions, a destructiveness that somehow seems acceptable if one has money. The development of Celia's character also suggests that stories traditionally stereotype the female, and that the myth of feminine pulchritude can be devastating to that sex. And certainly Vonnegut's long-time concern with drug abuse and physicians who prescribe destructive drugs reaches us through the vehicle of Celia.

Rudy's response to her develops several more Vonnegut themes: first, that Rudy cannot protect Celia from the harsh realities of life. He and, one presumes, Vonnegut refuse to write prescriptive stories that can blind the reader to reality; they can take hostile criticism if they have to, but they would rather speak a truth that can take readers home to reality, a place actually safer than illusion. Second, Rudy develops an old theme about the misinterpretation and abuse of love, a theme found in many Vonnegut novels, most especially in *Jailbird*. Rudy mistrusts love: when Celia asks why he is afraid of it, a telephone call reminds him of his accidental murder of the pregnant woman on Mother's Day (the day Vonnegut's own mother died from an overdose of drugs). Rudy lives with his painful reality and knows that love will not make it go away. His best response to Celia is common decency, honesty, kindness.

Finally, there are the sunglasses on the carousel that Celia first observes and later destroys. That image is elucidated in a later scene at Celia's funeral when Rudy is daydreaming about the purpose of life. He imagines Celia and all humans to be cells of a larger animal that are naturally sloughed off, as though "by a pancreas the size of the Milky Way," and he smiles when he thinks: "How comical that I, a single cell, should take my life so seriously!" Then, aware that he has been smiling at a funeral, he looks around to see if anyone has noticed. One person, at the other end of the pew, has. He is gazing at Rudy, and he does not look away. He is wearing large sunglasses

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with mirrored lenses. "He could have been anyone." Since this stranger has not been seen before, and is given no further development, he attracts the reader's attention. His enigma is clarified by a return to *Breakfast of Champions*. There, when Vonnegut enters the novel as himself, the inventor of the fantasy, he goes in a disguise of mirrored sunglasses to the arts festival in Midland City. And one of the honored guests there is Kilgore Trout, a science fiction writer who sees mirrors to be "leaks" or openings (peepholes?) into another universe. The sunglasses on the carousel in *Deadeye Dick* represent Vonnegut's vision into another fictional universe, a vision of life and history as "circles within circles," as a series of accidents ironically interrelated.

To attempt a full explication of this novel would no doubt result in an essay longer than the work itself. Such an attempt is neither possible nor nearly so much fun as reading the book, and re-reading it, for its complex nuances and the integrity of its interweaving with other Vonnegut works. A few further observations are too tempting to resist, however.

A pair of relatively minor characters in the novel (who also appeared in *Breakfast of Champions*) offer an interesting foil to Rudy's parents. Fred. T. Barry, the millionaire bachelor philanthropist who builds the arts center in Midland City, and his aging mother, Mildred, for whom the center is named, live a vital mythic fantasy life that somewhat parallels that of Rudy's parents, except that the Barrys do not take themselves or their fantasies seriously. They fly about the world taking joy from all cultural events, piloted in their Lear jet by Tiger Adams—the name, incidentally, of one of Vonnegut's adopted sons, also a pilot. The Barrys are the only ones in an audience of twenty people who are enthusiastic about Rudy's failed play in New York, whereas Rudy's parents wouldn't even read the play. The fortune which made the Mildred Barry Arts Center possible came ironically from Barrytron, Ltd., a manufacturer of sophisticated weapons systems. Mr. Barry, a self-educated inventor, "had entered the armaments business more or less by accident. The timer on an automatic washing machine which he had been manufacturing . . . turned out to have military application." By contrast, Rudy's parents had lost their inherited fortune for which they never worked, because of the accident of Rudy's "crime." His responsibility for the murder would have gone undetected had not his father hysterically assumed the blame for letting Rudy use the gun. The result was that Otto Waltz was sent to prison for two years and was ruined financially in a lawsuit brought by the dead woman's husband. (Never mind that Rudy and his brother retire on funds from a lawsuit brought—by the same lawyer—against those responsible for the radioactive fireplace that accidentally killed their mother.)

In contrast to Emma Waltz's passive dependency, Mildred Barry finds delight in amusing herself and her servants by imitating birds, like "the bulbul of Malaysia and the morepork owl of New Zealand." Rudy observes "a basic mistake my parents had made about life: They thought that it would be very wrong if anybody ever laughed at them."

Ironically, it is Rudy's useless mother who, energized by the tumors growing in her brain, prevents the Arts Center from operating by her campaign against the two pieces of abstract art Barry purchased to begin the Center's collection. One is a statue by Henry Moore which Emma Waltz thinks looks like a "figure eight on its side," the other is a painting by Rabo Karabekian—a huge green painting with one vertical orange stripe called "The Temptation of Saint Anthony." We might see the Henry Moore sculpture as the symbol of eternity without much difficulty. But what of "The Temptation of Saint Anthony?" The answer is found in *Breakfast of Champions* again, where the same painting and artist provide Vonnegut, the intruding author, with his "born again" experience in the Mildred Barry Center, at what he calls "the spiritual climax of this book . . ."

When Karabekian is hatefully criticized in *Breakfast* for his painting, he rises to his own defense by saying that his picture:

> shows everything about life which truly matters, with nothing left out. It is a picture of the awareness of every animal. It is the immaterial core of every animal—the 'I am' to which all messages are sent. It is all that is alive in any of us . . . unwavering and pure, no matter what preposterous adventure may befall us. A sacred picture of Saint Anthony alone is one vertical, unwavering band of light. Our awareness is all that is alive and maybe sacred in any of us . . ."

When we are also told in *Breakfast* that Saint Anthony was an Egyptian who founded the "first monastery, which was a place where men could live simple lives and pray often to the Creator of the Universe, without the distractions of ambition and sex . . ." we realize that this painting in *Deadeye Dick* functions as a foil to other representational religious paintings in the book, paintings which express the violence of Christian history. The irony, of course, is that it is Rudy's mother who makes empty the Mildred Barry Center, the Center which Vonnegut has told us is symbolic of his own head, a head he presumably wishes to free from cultural fantasies so his vision will be as pure as Karabekian's. And the further irony is that Emma Waltz has brain tumors because she stood so often in front of the radioactive fireplace to look at her dead husband's one good painting, a work he never finished, an illusion on which she depended, having no dance of her own.

The clusters of multiple ironies in this book whirl toward ever greater density, as if each were a vortex connected with all others—and with the whole constellation of *Deadeye Dick* dynamically intertwined with others from Vonnegut's literary and life experience. One feels that the author's entire history and perception come together in this novel, a fictional cosmos with everything held in animated balance by a playful, magic energy. Its quiet spectacularity seems to require the participation of the reader in its whole. The result is voodoo, as practiced in the novel by Hippolyte Paul DeMille. The shaman is Vonnegut—with the deterministic philosophy of a Hippolyte Taine, the commitment of a Paul to spread the Beatitudinal word, and the savvy to put it into a literary DeMille production. *Deadeye Dick* is truly a novel that could never work in any other genre. In fact, it is *not* any other genre—it is Vonnegut's own.

And now, lest readers take this review too seriously, let me remind them that my response is written mostly in present tense—the tense Vonnegut tells us is the easiest for beginners learning to speak the Creole language of *Deadeye Dick's* Haitian voodoo shaman.

—*Loree Rackstraw*

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SF: Fact & Facsimile

1. [Facsimile of] *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, April, 1965. Edited and with a Preface by Edward L. Ferman. Memoirs edited by Edward L. Ferman and Martin H. Greenberg. $16.95

2. *Bridges to Fantasy*. Edited by George E. Slusser, Eric S. Rabkin, and Robert Scholes. $18.95

3. *The Fantastic Stories of Cornell Woolrich*. Edited by Charles G. Waugh and Martin H. Greenberg, with an introduction by Francis M. Nevins, Jr., and an afterword by Barry N. Malzberg. $19.50

4. *The Best Science Fiction of Arthur Conan Doyle*. Edited by Charles G. Waugh and Martin H. Greenberg, with an introduction by George E. Slusser. $14.95

The Southern Illinois University Press *Alternatives* Series. General Editors: Eric S. Rabkin, Martin H. Greenberg, and Joseph D. Olander.

The first four books in the Southern Illinois University Press *Alternatives* series were reviewed in this space in June of 1981 under the title: "SF: Mapping the Territory." The concluding comment to that review was that to view the four books together "is, in a sense, to see a rough map of modern science fiction."

The "second generation" of the SIU series is much broader in scope—emphasizing the editors' intent "to serve the growing critical audience of science fiction, fantastic fiction, and speculative fiction." Certainly the thrust in these four books is *away* from science fiction.

The only "traditional SF" work in this grouping is the reprint of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* from April, 1965. But this reissue—especially when compared with its predecessor in the series (the July, 1939, *Astounding*) seems primarily to demonstrate that nostalgia isn't what it used to be. John Campbell's *Astounding* established the norms for science fiction during the 1940s to the extent that "Golden Age" and "Age of Campbell" are roughly synonymous terms for the period among buffs of the genre. Since Campbell died in 1971, and since *Astounding* is no longer published under that name (having been renamed *Analog* in 1960), the reprint of a 1939 issue of *that* magazine with *that* editor seemed especially significant. Further, the issue included the first published version of A.E. Van Vogt's classic, "Black Destroyer," a work often reprinted, but only in revised form, as well as an early Isaac Asimov story, notable for a kind of endearing juvenile clumsiness. Metaphorically, the magazine was a Buick roadster with a straight-eight engine and a rumble seat, "a very nice thing for the sort of person who likes that sort of thing." What we have here, though, is a '65 Chevy wagon—not different (save for the high price of its mint condition) from those available quite readily from second-hand dealers, and not all that different from the models coming out today. This is hardly a classic edition.

The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction is important to the history of SF, all right. Along with *Galaxy*, *F&SF* (as it's usually abbreviated) tended to break the Campbellian mold which by 1949 (the year of *F&SF*'s founding) and 1950 (the year of *Galaxy*'s), had become quite restrictive. Thus it is reasonably accurate to say that during the 1950s—granting the existence of a few outlying and subsidiary provinces—all science fiction was divided into three parts: the *Astounding* mode of "hard" science fiction, the *Galaxy* mode, which tended to focus more on "social" sciences, and the *F&SF* mode, which was much more literarily innovative and ambitious than its rivals.

The emphasis on literary excellence was the contribution of the magazine's founder, Anthony Boucher, who edited it until 1958 (he died in 1968). Boucher's title for the magazine, placing "fantasy" at least on a par with, and perhaps even ahead of, "science fiction" gives some indication of his intent to focus on literary merit rather than technology, to emphasize "fiction" rather than "science." And Boucher succeeded to the extent that any standard reference work on the history of SF will tend to stress *F&SF*'s stylistic focus. "The literary aristocrat among American SF magazines" is what *F&SF* is called in Neil Barron's *Anatomy of Wonder* (N.Y.: Bowker, 1981), while Peter Nicholls' *Science Fiction Encyclopedia* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1979) says it "from its inception showed a more sophisticated literary outlook than any previous sf magazine."

For all of these reasons, it seems most appropriate to issue a "book presenting a representative issue of *F&SF*"; so why am I not grateful? Well, the issue *is* representative; *F&SF* continues to be published, and the format of the publication continues to be the same (more-or-less—mostly more) as in this reprint.

Although Edward Ferman's name appears as managing editor on the masthead, he tells us in a prefatory note that the April 1965 issue is "one of the first I edited." Another major "first" for the issue is the publication of the initial number of Gahan Wilson's long-running series of cartoons. Among its "regular" features is a science essay by Isaac Asimov (number seventy-eight, says Asimov in an afternote, in a series of which "the number is 266 at the present moment of writing"). The "big name" writers who published fiction in the issue include Poul Anderson and Asimov. But Anderson's story became part of a larger work which, in his afternote, he tells us "is still available in paperback." The Asimov story, the author tells us, "has been reprinted twice in other magazines and was included in four anthologies"—not counting its reprinting in Asimov's own collection, *Nightfall and Other Stories*.

The point of all this is that the particular issue of *F&SF* here reprinted has no real *reason* for being reprinted. It does not recall Boucher's editorship, which had long since passed. The editor it *does* recall needs no recalling, since he continues to edit the magazine. The major writers included are represented by works easily-available in other (and cheaper) formats. A current issue of *F&SF*—or any of the cheap copies of back issues available at used-book stores—can supply a sample of Gahan Wilson's cartooning and of Asimov's science writing. (And Asimov's science essays, like his fictions, are widely reprinted.)

Oddly enough, the most signal part of the reprint in clarifying the singular contribution of *F&SF* to the history of science fiction is probably

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Judith Merril's book review column. Yet, though most of the contributors to this issue, including Asimov, Anderson, Ferman, and Robert C. Hodgins (who tells us that the story he wrote for the issue "is the only short story I ever published") make some comment on their contributions, there is no such comment from Merril, even though she has contributed to the *Alternatives* series elsewhere.

Whatever the reason for the lacuna, it's unfortunate. Merril was book review editor for *F&SF* from 1965 to 1969. Her name is usually credited with the application of the term "New Wave" to the innovative and literarily experimental SF that, originating in England, began to be more and more in evidence in America after 1965. Her column in this issue, which obviously had to be among her first as book review editor, considers—along with some fairly typical SF works—William Golding's novel, *The Spire*, and *Short Friday*, a collection of Isaac Bashevis Singer's stories. The inclusion of such works in SF magazine reviews was unusual at the time, and Merril pointedly notes in reference to the Singer collection: "the Singer stories are *not* sci-fic, or even science fantasy—with two or three exceptions—because he does not rationalize them with reality-as-we-know-it. He simply succeeds in convincing us that our reality is perhaps less than conclusive."

In fact, Merril's column, with its probings of characteristics of science fiction, of fantasy, and of the various possibilities that exist between the two, does rather more than anything else in the reprint to foreshadow the reasons behind the other three *Alternatives* series books considered here. The point draws particular stress from the fact that the last entry in the book review section (an entry *not* by Merril) ends up quoting the driving force behind *F&SF*, the force that had left the magazine well before April 1965: "Anthony Boucher once said to me, 'What SF fans really like is fantasy, but they don't like it called that.' "

I have no intention to occupy this limited space with a distinction between science fiction and fantasy; Boucher found room for both in the title of his magazine, and the editors of the *Alternatives* series seem determined to find a rough balance between the two as well. Further, they themselves seem to feel no overwhelming drive toward definition. Among the first four books in the series was *Bridges to Science Fiction*, a collection of papers presented at the first Eaton Conference on Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature; here, we have a collection from the second Eaton Conference titled *Bridges to Fantasy*.

Like the earlier collection, this one is heavily weighted with academic credentials. George Slusser, associated with both books, is the curator of the Eaton Collection at Riverside in the California University system; here he is joined by Eric Rabkin of the University of Michigan, author of *The Fantastic in Literature*, and Robert Scholes of Brown University, a leading American authority on structuralism who has edged into science fiction with *Structural Fabulation* and *Science Fiction: History, Science, and Vision*, which he co-authored with Rabkin.

For whatever reason, *Bridges to Fantasy* seems a much better book than its predecessor. The papers are scholarly and rigorous, but readable as well, and informative to anyone seriously interested in the relationship between fantastic literature and current modes of literary experimentation practiced by writers not ordinarily thought of as involved with fantasy or science fiction.

In this regard in particular, Larry McCaffery's "Form, Formula, and Fantasy: Generative Structures in Contemporary Fiction," which balances such "standard" SF authors as Delany and Zelazny with such literary experimenters as Barth, Barthelme, Coover, and Pynchon, is a valuable essay. David Ketterer, one of the most able scholars writing in this area today, in an essay on "Power Fantasy in the 'Science Fiction' of Mark Twain," traces an important strand in American fantastic literature, concluding that "The theme of power fantasy is but one instance of the general fact that the attempt to distinguish between science fiction themes and fantasy themes simply will not serve." Gary Kern's "The Search for Fantasy: From Primitive Man to Pornography" historically analyzes fantastic literature from Babylonian myth to modern Times Square; the essay provokes opposition in its conclusion that most science fiction, indeed, most contemporary fantastic literature, is *dead fantasy*. As he makes this argument, surely an annoying one to most of his likely readers, Kern's lucidity and vigor inform at the same time they deflate. *Bridges to Fantasy* is one of the best of the many anthologies of criticism in this field.

The remaining two books in this group form an unusual pair. The *Alternatives* series has already shown an interest in resurrecting works of fantasy and science fiction that have been in danger of oblivion. Thus, in the first four works released in the series there was *The Science Fiction of Mark Clifton*, in which Barry Malzberg pointed out that the author was "a major writer of his time" who "earned for the totality of his science fiction something considerably less than twenty thousand dollars." The SIU edition of his stories marked "the first English language collection" of the stories of a writer "so obscure in modern science fiction circles that . . . science fiction editors in their twenties and thirties . . . did not know who he was."

The two "resurrected" writers represented here fill a different niche. To begin with, neither is known primarily as an SF—or even as a fantasy—author, and neither shares Clifton's obscurity.

The first, Cornell Woolrich, was a successful writer for detective magazines and author of several important crime and "suspense" novels, the best known of which was probably *The Bride Wore Black*. Further, while Malzberg's afterword to *The Fantastic Stories of Cornell Woolrich* tells us that Woolrich received only six hundred dollars for the movie rights to the Alfred Hitchcock classic, *Rear Window* ("one story in a collection of eight . . . sold . . . for five thousand dollars"), this author was still able to will $850,000 to Columbia University to establish a creative writing program in honor of his mother.

Shortly after his death in 1968, Woolrich was frequently reprinted; for a random sample, the 1971 copy of *Paperbound Books in Print* lists seven titles by him. "Now, more than a decade later," Malzberg writes, "he is almost out of print; an item for the specialty and university presses, an occasional republication in an Ellery Queen annual. . . . There are no other paperbacks. The hardcovers—what few copies remain—are for the collectors."

But, unlike Clifton, whom Malzberg cites as "one of the twelve most influential writers of science fiction

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during its fifty-four-year commercial publishing history," Woolrich is an outsider in the field covered by the *Alternatives* series. Whatever his influence and importance as a writer of detective fiction and works of suspense, Woolrich was not a major figure in either SF or fantasy, and this collection of his "fantastic stories" does little to illuminate either field. Further, the stories' intrinsic merit, admirably defended by Malzberg in his afterword, is obscured by their tendency to "date"—a characteristic perhaps even more common to the detective fiction with which Woolrich was so familiar than to SF or fantasy. Some of the lines sound almost like self-parody: " 'Here we go, baby!' he shouts, teeth bared. 'Now I'm going to find out what it really feels like to fly into the side of a mountain! . . .' " And in the next sentence, "There is only the storm to hear the smash of the plane as it splinters itself against the rock. . . ."

Popular culture buffs cannot help but be grateful for the reissue of the Woolrich stories, and will appreciate the values Malzberg finds embedded in the occasionally purple prose. Yet, the fact remains that the significance of this collection to the development of fantasy and SF is minimal.

However, if Woolrich is more important to popular culture than to the literature of fantasy and SF, the same judgment is magnified considerably when we look at the last of these four books, *The Best Science Fiction of Arthur Conan Doyle.*

To think of Doyle as a science fiction writer, particularly as one sufficiently prolific to have a collection of "best" stories, may initially seem startling. But Doyle's works centered on Professor Challenger, while less famous than the Sherlock Holmes group, are reasonable examples of their author's popularity. (A novel of the Challenger group, *The Lost World* [1912] is an early and influential model of the "land that time forgot" SF formula, and has twice been made into films [1925 and 1960].)

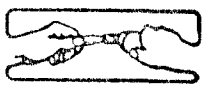
Only two of the stories in this collection, though, are Challenger works; two others feature Sherlock Holmes facing opponents aided by super science. But all 14 of these stories—which cover the fifty-year span from 1879 to 1929—have their interest. There are occasional glitches; "The American's Tale" is set in the marshlands of Arizona, and the high-altitude monsters of "The Horror of Heights" seem somewhat clumsy. But there is variety in these stories, and occasional touches of humor that are hard to come by in early science fiction. For example, in "The Los Amigos Fiasco," first published in 1892, an American township undertakes to execute a criminal with electrocution. Unfortunately, they discover that increasing the voltage to a level they feel will be instantly fatal has the opposite effect. The condemned man's vitality is enormously increased by the high voltage. Twice they try to hang him, but the noose doesn't even slow someone so electrically stimulated. "But . . . Marshal Carpenter was not a man to be euchred so easily. . . . 'Duncan Warner,' he said, slowly, 'you are here to play your part, and I am here to play mine. Your game is to live if you can, and my game is to carry out the sentence of the law. You've beat us on electricity. I'll give you one there. And you've beat us on hanging, for you seem to thrive on it. But it's my turn to beat you now, for my duty has to be done.' " So saying, the Marshal empties his six-shooter into the miscreant, who then complains about the holes blasted through his coat. Finally giving up on the execution, the Marshal orders his would-be victim into the "new gaol," stating that "the prison will wear him out." But a learned observer notes what we as audience already know, "that it is much more probable that he will wear out the prison."

The lightness of the dime novel diction and plot give the story a flavor that one wishes were more available in early SF; had it been more available, the field might have avoided the humorless reputation it maintained even into the 1960s.

The Doyle collection will pleasantly surprise readers unconversant with the author's works beyond the Sherlock Holmes stories. Further, even though these stories exist in other collections, those collections are out of print and difficult to come by. If the Woolrich book seems aimed at the scholar of popular literature, the Doyle collection will appeal to the general reader as well.

—Thomas J. Remington

Toothpaste Press



Harry Duncan taught a popular course in typography and printing at the University of Iowa. Sometimes students at the Writers' Workshop took that course and brought out their own editions, and a few of these students became so fascinated with printing itself that it rivaled writing as a central interest. Alan and Cinda Kornblum, of Toothpaste Press in West Branch, Iowa, are among those former students of Harry Duncan. They both continue to write, but they have become publishers as well.

When Kornblum first came to Iowa City in July 1970 he began publishing *Toothpaste,* a mimeographed magazine. He worked for Harry Duncan in December 1971 and was hired by him that winter. By the summer of 1972—after Duncan had moved elsewhere—Kornblum and his wife had bought a letterpress and had also bought Harry Duncan's house in West Branch. It was the start of Toothpaste Press.

The press brought out its first book in the winter of 1974, while Kornblum was teaching part time. The second book came in April of 1975, and in the fall of 1975 the first issue of *Dental Floss,* a literary magazine, appeared. Now the press publishes, typically, ten to twelve books a year and—with the help of grants and sales—is staying afloat.

Of his press, Kornblum says, "I feel it's the combination of quality and volume that sets us apart from many other fine presses. We're trying to combine the vision of the fine small press printer with the entrepreneurial spirit of the small independent publisher."

He says it another way in a poem called "Work Song," from a collection of his own poems *(Awkward Song)* that Toothpaste issued in 1980:

> Work, Work. What is
> the lesson of work, what
> is the pleasure?
> Work. Work. The thing made.
> The thing heavy in the hand.
>
> Work. The raw materials.
> Work. The combination of
> powers: the hand, machine,
> electricity work together.
> The hand attributes sentience.
>
> Attributing sentience to
> materials, to the machine,
> the hand addresses and displays

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the work to the machine,
to the materials, "Look!"

Work, sing the materials,
stacked around the machine.
Work, sings the machine,
greased and oiled.
Clean-up, then the hand

strikes a match, smoke at
a distance, part of the work,
To regard the work.
Work, the machine, materials &
hand vibrate, sing, yeah work!

Sentient? A book is tactile. It appeals to the senses as well as to the mind, when it's well-made; is gratifying to hold as well as to read. Perhaps the first thing about Toothpaste books is their fine quality. The press uses classic Renaissance typefaces, papers that are textured and often handmade, and the books are hand-printed and -bound. As Bernard Welt says in *Washington Review*, they are "some of the best looking books in the country. . . . In design, their bias is toward modest, slightly old-fashioned elegance; in writing they specialize in idiosyncratic but highly accessible work." A Toothpaste book, he says, is "funny and serious at once, quirky in subject, images and revelations, and intimate in tone."

the hand addresses and displays
the work to the machine,
to the materials, "Look!"

Not the machine itself, but the unity of machine and maker, hand on the machine, harmony of design, content, multiple choices of typeface, illustration, paper: in a fine book every element suggests conscious choice, and in an achieved book the result, the product, seems fairly liberated from mundane problems of choice. The parts fit. It seems, in fact, they could have been fitted in no other way than the way they are.

"Elegant" is the proper word. Toothpaste's books are slim and, frequently, tall; the typefaces are often spread out; even the letters are often tall and narrow. Colors for covers and endpapers and illustrations are—even when the colors are vivid—integrated. Each book has the appearance of being "put together" in design and content, a presentation rather than an accident, and most all Toothpaste books have a sense of discovery about them. They're a pleasure to open.

An example might be *Gone Sailing*, poems by Helen Adam with five drawings by Ann Mikolowski, which came out in spring, 1980. The book is 36 pages long, 5¼ × 10¼ inches—it's tall and narrow. *Gone Sailing* is printed in two colors (russet brown and black) throughout on Gutenberg Laid, a heavy German mouldmade paper; 1,000 copies were printed with paper cover, 150 with cloth. The book was honored for design by the Midwest Books Competition and the Chicago Book Clinic. In the *American Book Review*, Michael Davidson speaks of Helen Adam's poems as offering mystery, wonder, humor, transformation. The poet uses archaic diction with comfortable grace. W.H. Auden awarded her the *New York Quarterly's* Madeline Sadin Award for "excellence in craft—a poem of moving voice, extraordinary image and musical ear." *Gone Sailing* presents its poems in Poliphilus typeface: large, spacious, understated, decorative.

Canciones, by Antonio Machado and translated by Robert Bly, is another narrow, tall book printed with dark green hard cover or soft wrapper and stamped with the title in gold calligraphy. It, too, uses Poliphilus type. Bly handles these poems with generous affection. "In some ways I love Antonio Machado more than any other poet of the twentieth century," he says. ". . . his inner calm, even joyfulness—all of these nourish people, here and in Spain." The poems are printed in italic, appropriate for songs. The book was honored by the Chicago Book Clinic design competition.

By contrast, *Countries*, poems by Anne Waldman with linoleum block prints by Reed Bye, is a narrow horizontal book with dove grey covers and mossy green decorative illustrations. This book is handset in Goudy Modern and Goudy Open—typefaces that appear antique—on thick, creamy Strathmore text paper. It has a travel theme. The book is appealingly quiet and graceful. Its printing style seems to fit its epigraph from Walt Whitman: "I see vapors exhaling from unexplored countries." If it's possible for the color grey to suggest vapor, as in low-lying fog, that is the impression of the cover.

Waldman's *Countries* is fog and moss; *Reasons for the Sky*, poems by Jim Hanson, is pure air. In *Fine Print*, Leigh McLellan describes this book: "Light blue text paper and matching cover carry the theme of sky through-

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(signature) **Robley Wilson, Jr., Editor**

out. 'Sky' is printed on the upper cover in large translucent white letters as though skywritten by a plane or cloud."

Ruth Krauss's book, *Re-examination of Freedom*, is perhaps the most exquisitely printed of the lot: it is 11 × 9 inches oblong, with an intaglio cover that was printed at the artist's studio. The text is done in light blue ink. The book was funded under an Iowa Arts Council Apprenticeship Grant; the 4-plate color intaglio is by James L. Ochs; the whole production costs $20.00.

Why call work of such elegance "Toothpaste?" Kornblum says the name "was influenced by my delight with the work of Jim Dine and Ted Berrigan, and the whole notion that the common object was a suitable starting point for works of art." The logo was drawn in 1975. It shows two hands, one with toothpaste and the other a brush, outlined to form a T. It's a very successful logo—handsome and even witty—and goes a long way toward carrying off such an improbable name for a press.

The press has also published the work of Robert Creely, Robert Bly, Alice Notley, Carl Rakowski, and Anselm Hollo. In 1981 it issued an eccentric little book of poems called *Charms*, by Jonathan Cott, who is better known for his interviews in *Rolling Stone*. The 1982 book list includes titles by Thomas Disch *(Orders of the Retina)* and children's books by Dave Morice. So far, the press has published mostly poetry (an exception being *Mercury*, a short story by Jonis Agee), but they are expanding in fiction. This fall they have brought out a 45-page collection of stories by Brian Swann and have inaugurated a series of science fiction short stories edited by Thomas M. Disch.

Many Toothpaste books are quite inexpensive—those with folded paper covers start at about $3.00 and run up to around $7.50. The cloth books run between $15 and $30. Certainly some of these are destined to be collectors items.

The press won seven design awards for 1982. Notley's book, *How Spring Comes*, was nominated for the American Book Award for poetry; it won the San Francisco Poetry Center award and was one of five books from Toothpaste that was taken by the 1982 Chicago Book Clinic design competition.

The University of Iowa Library has always bought all Toothpaste's work in both cloth and paper, and the Special Collections department has worked with the press. Last spring the library published a partial bibliography of the press in their magazine, *Books At Iowa*.

Toothpaste books are distributed to bookstores by Bookslinger in the Midwest, Bookpeople and Small Press Distribution on the West Coast, and by the New York Small Press Association in the East. They have been successfully exhibited at the New York Bookfair, the St. Paul Bookfair, the American Booksellers Association Convention, and the American Library Convention—all during 1982.

"Many small presses publish a book, send out some initial orders, and store the books in closets," Kornblum says. Not Toothpaste. In 1981 they sold $20,000 worth of poetry books, took in $10,000 in job printing, and received $10,000 in grants. All this work takes enormous energy. "Trying to juggle the financial demands of a small business, and the artistic demands of fine craftsmanship, requires occasional bouts of intense concentration and 14-hour days," according to Kornblum. Small press publishing is—must be—a work of love.

Last year, the press took in a quarter of its income in job work for places like the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. They publish broadsides as well as books. And *Dental Floss*, their "once-in-a-while contribution to the little magazine energy pool," is still coming out. Each issue is handset in Centaur types and printed in two colors throughout, on Ragston paper. The magazine is handsewn into wrappers, and past issues have featured the work of Josephine Clare, Sheila Heldenbrand, Bob Perelman, and Cinda Kornblum. It costs $3 per copy, or two issues for $5.

Kornblum does not usually solicit manuscripts. In spite of that, he gets three mail submissions a day plus two phone submissions a week. He makes all decisions for publication himself, and he says that he usually publishes work that he believes in and that he thinks will sell.

A catalog and booklists are available from Toothpaste Press, P.O. Box 546, West Branch, Iowa 52358.

—Mary Peterson

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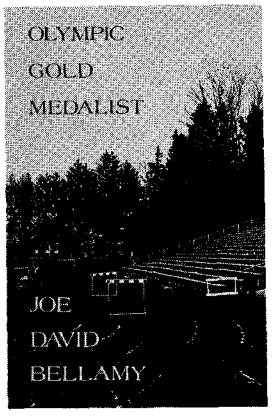

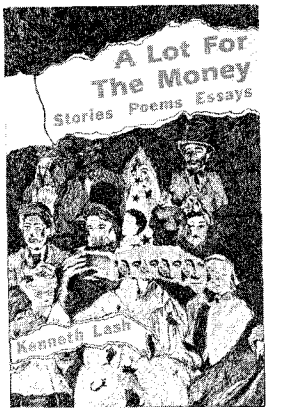

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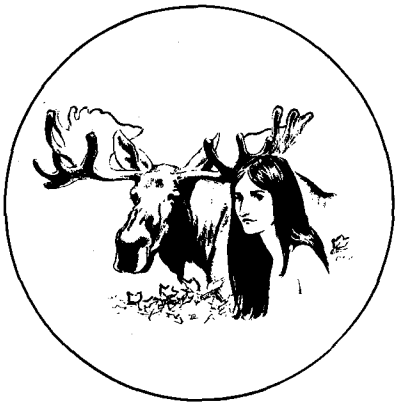

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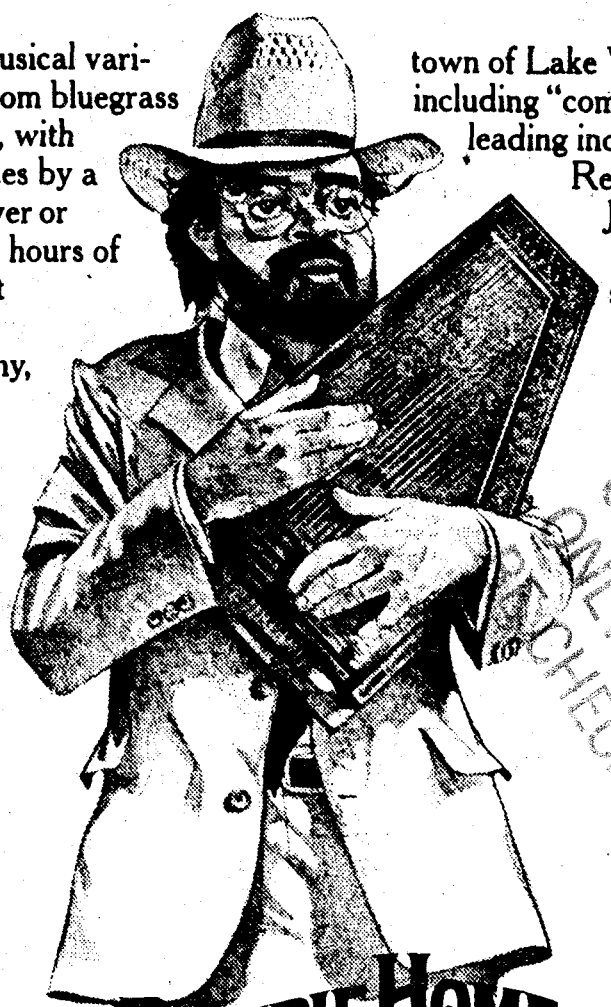

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